

**Tilman Lüdke**

# **Jihad made in Germany**

# **Studien zur Zeitgeschichte des Nahen Ostens und Nordafrikas**

**herausgegeben von**

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**Band 12**

**Tilman Lüdke**

# **Jihad made in Germany**

**Ottoman and German Propaganda  
and Intelligence Operations in the First World War**

## *Für meine Eltern*

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## **Preface:**

This study analyses German and Ottoman efforts to promote a general Muslim uprising through intelligence and propaganda activities both in the Ottoman Empire and the colonial possessions of the Entente powers in the First World War. Where appropriate, reference will be made to similar activities carried out by the British. The argument is that Germany overrated the power of Pan-Islam and falsely believed that an alliance with the Ottoman Empire would put this force at Germany's disposal, to be used as a weapon against the Entente powers. Britain, on the other hand, underrated Ottoman fighting strength and internal cohesion, and overrated the appeal of Arab nationalism to gain the support of the Ottoman Arabs for Britain's ends.

The book examines the respective expectations Germany and the Ottoman Empire had from the alliance they concluded on August 2, 1914. Germany wished to gain the support of the Ottoman sultan as sultan-caliph for its Pan-Islamic propaganda effort, which aimed at causing a jihad to break out against the colonial powers. The Ottoman Empire desired to make an alliance with an industrial power to strengthen its armed forces and to enable itself to defend Ottoman territories efficiently against European aggression. The study then analyses how the Germans and Ottomans proceeded to make this jihad happen and how they endeavoured to gain information about how this could be brought about. A chapter on the more general nature of these endeavours is followed by one examining a select number of case studies. The next two chapters deal with German and Ottoman propaganda efforts and again a number of case studies.

The book aims to find a convincing explanation for why both German and British policies and propaganda efforts failed to achieve the desired results. This explanation appears, on the one hand, to be given by the inability of intelligence networks or agents to make their findings accepted by British or German policy-makers. This failure is all the more striking for the way intelligence findings revealed erroneous assumptions of German and British politicians. In contrast, the Ottomans managed to achieve a limited deal of success in the field of offensive propaganda and remarkable success in their endeavour to preserve the internal cohesion of the Ottoman Empire right up to the end of the war.

The reason for this failure of the Germans and the British lies in the fact that the propagandists either misconceived entirely where popular loyalties lay, or to which extent "loyal" people were prepared to fight for the cause "of Islam." Propaganda, just like espionage, suffered from manifold deficiencies both in regard to organisation and distribution and to the personalities of the individuals involved. Departmental, professional and even personal rivalries and jealousies greatly hampered the efficiency of the propaganda machine; in general personal interests among the propagandists, especially the "oriental" ones, appear to have had far greater importance than an interest in the success of the propaganda effort.

This study was submitted as a Dphil. Study in the summer of 2001; yet, due to the time elapsing until publication, some attempt has been made to incorporate the results of more recent research on the First World War and its origins in the introductory chapter.

Although it goes without saying that the responsibility for all inaccuracies, omissions and mistakes in this book is entirely my own the credits for its completion have to be shared out among a huge number of people too numerous for all of them to appear in these acknowledgements by name.

A more than generous share of credits, complemented with an equally large amount of gratitude, is due to my supervisor, Dr. Eugene Rogan, whose knowledgeable, kind and always optimistic support saved this study (or more precisely its author) more than once from foundering on the rocks. I am also grateful for Dr. Rogan's seemingly inexhaustible patience which came in particularly handy when I was feeling close to the end of my tether.

I am indebted to the Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies at the University of Cambridge, which furnished me with a generous travel grant for conducting research in Istanbul.

I am extremely grateful to my parents for their love and support. This was invaluable throughout the years this study took to be completed, in any case far too valuable to be expressed in words appropriately. I also thank Carolina for ...a lot of things she knows best herself.

My friends and colleagues both within and without Koç University were a great help during my time in Istanbul, and so were many of the people I met during my long time at St. Antony's College.

Finally I would like to thank my friends Jens, Rob, Math, Melanie, Christoph and Alessandro with whom I shared a house during the last 20 months of my work on this study. They succeeded in establishing a community characterised both by academic excellence and by a vivid social life. A man in the desperate final stages of his study could not have wished for a more encouraging and comforting environment.

## **Table of Contents:**

<b>1. Introduction</b>	
1.1. Jihad made in Germany	1
1.2. The First World War	2
1.3. The First World War in the Middle East	5
1.4. Intelligence in the Great War	7
1.5. Propaganda in the First World War - the German-Ottoman Jihad Propaganda	11
1.6. The Framework of Measuring Successes and Failures of Propaganda	13
1.7. The Sources	16
1.8. The Structure	17
<b>2. Historical Introduction</b>	
2.1. British Fears of Pan-Islam	19
2.2. The Ottoman Empire since the revolution of 1908	19
2.3. Germany's Aspirations to Empire and the Emergence of her Rivalry with Britain	25
2.4. War without Strategy - Britain, German, and Ottoman War Aims	27
2.5. Britain - the Development of an "Eastern" Strategy	30
2.6. Turkey and German Strategic War Aims	32
2.7. The Jihad Strategy	33
2.8. The Role of Islam in Organising Resistance to Imperial Expansion	34
2.9. Prelude to the "Jihad made in Germany": The War in Tripolitania, 1911 – 1912	38
2.10. The German-Ottoman alliance and the Ottoman Entry into the War	40
2.11. From Alliance to War	46
2.12. The German-Ottoman Alliance and the Jihad - the "Muslim Factor"	48
<b>3. European Preoccupations with Jihad - German and Ottoman     Attempts to Promote Jihad</b>	
3.1. European Intelligence Services before the First World War	56
3.2. Intelligence in the Middle East	58
3.3. The Agents	59
3.4. British Preoccupations with Pan-Islam - British Fears of Jihad	62
3.5. German Intelligence in the Middle East - Max Freiherr von Oppenheim	70
3.6. Ottoman Intelligence - the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa	75
<b>4. Case Studies of German and Ottoman Attempts to Promote Jihad</b>	
4.1. German, Ottoman and British Operations to Promote or Counter Jihad	83
4.2. A Factfinding Mission - Dr. Hoffmann	84
4.3. The Battles for Egypt and Tripolitania	85
4.4. The First Suez Canal Campaign - Analysis	90

<b>4.5. Conflicting Interests I: Egypt - Germans, Ottomans and Egyptian Nationalists</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>4.6. Conflicting Interests II: Libya - Germans, Ottomans, Italians and the Sanusiya</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>4.7. The Problem of Communications</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>4.7.1. Case I - The Mission von Gumpenberg</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>4.7.2. Case II - The NILI or A-Organisation</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>4.8. Conclusion</b>	<b>111</b>
 <b>5. Manufacturing Support: German and Ottoman Propaganda Operations</b>	
<b>5.1. German and Ottoman Propaganda Operations</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>5.2. Oppenheim's Plan</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>5.3. The Intelligence Office for the East</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>5.3.1. Table 4.1: Members of the Intelligence Office for the East</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>5.4. Propaganda in the Ottoman Empire</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>5.5. Oppenheim's Propaganda Activities in the Second Half of the War</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>5.6. Results of German Propaganda according to German Eye-Witnesses</b>	<b>140</b>
 <b>6. German and Ottoman Propaganda - Case Studies</b>	
<b>6.1. A Muslim in Disguise - Max Roloff</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>6.2. Organising Propaganda in the Ottoman Empire - Dr. Prüfer and Max von Oppenheim</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>6.3. Propaganda in the Sudan and Tripolitania</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>6.3.1. Propaganda in the Sudan</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>6.3.2. Propaganda in Tripolitania</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>6.4. Ottoman Propaganda in Tripolitania</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>6.5. The "Prisoner of the Mahdi" as Propagandist - Carl Neufeld</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>6.6. The Mission von Stotzingen</b>	<b>177</b>
 <b>7. Results of Intelligence and Propaganda Activities - Reasons for Failure</b>	
<b>7.1. General Reasons for the Failure of German and Ottoman Intelligence and Propaganda Activities</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>7.2. Results of German Propaganda</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>7.3. Reasons for Failure - the Germans</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>7.4. The Performance of Ottoman Intelligence and Propaganda</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>7.5. A Point of Comparison - The Results of British Intelligence and Propaganda Operations</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>7.5.1. Reasons for Failure - the British</b>	<b>207</b>
 <b>Appendix:</b>	
<b>Individuals Suspected of Espionage in the Ottoman Empire</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Geographical and Personal Index</b>	<b>249</b>

### **List of Abbreviations:**

**BBA:** Başbakanlık Arşivi, Istanbul

**FA/MA:** Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv (Federal Archive/Military Archive), Freiburg

**IWM:** Imperial War Museum, London

**OPA:** Private Archive of the Oppenheim-Bank, Cologne

**PAFO:** Political Archive of the German Foreign Office, Bonn, now Berlin

**PRO:** Public Record Office, London

**PSS:** Preußisches Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin-Dahlem

**WAV:** Kriegsarchiv Wien (War Archive, Vienna)

### **List of Abbreviation of Islamic Calendar Months as used in the BBA Catalogue:**

- |                      |                         |                    |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Muharrem = M.     | 5. Cemaziyelevvel = CA. | 9. Ramazan = N.    |
| 2. Safer = S.        | 6. Cemaziyelahir = C.   | 10. Shevval = L.   |
| 3. Rebiülevvel = RA. | 7. Receb = B.           | 11. Zilkaade = ZA. |
| 4. Rebiülahir = R.   | 8. Shaban = Sh.         | 12. Zilhicce = Z.  |

### **Further Abbreviations:**

**TM:** Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa

**IOE:** Intelligence Office for the East (Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient)

### **Note on Transcription:**

Arabic terms in the text have been transcribed in the common transcription used in English. Turkish terms have been transcribed using modern Turkish orthography.



## Introduction:

"There is a dry wind blowing through the East, and the parched grasses wait the spark. And the wind is blowing towards the Indian frontier...I have reports from agents everywhere."<sup>1</sup> These words, penned by John Buchan in his novel "Greenmantle" in 1916, sum up British fears of German and Ottoman activities to create Muslim rebellions, a general *jihad* (meaning, in the context of this study, a Muslim holy war against the infidel), against the colonial powers in their possessions.

This attempted "*jihad* made in Germany" is the main topic of the book. Through the work of their nascent intelligence services the Germans and, to a lesser extent, the Ottomans came to perceive Pan-Islam as an ally in their struggle against the Entente. Throughout the four years of the war they conducted an active and costly propaganda campaign to produce a *jihad*, with rather disappointing results. Britain, on the other hand, was worried about the Pan-Islamic menace and took tough countermeasures to prevent this *jihad* from actually breaking out. One of these countermeasures was her embarking upon an alliance with Arab nationalism, in the desire to use particularistic nationalisms against the Pan-Islamism propagated by Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Britain's expectations from Arab nationalism were equally disappointed (as were Arab expectations from cooperation with Britain).

This study is an attempt to analyse German and Ottoman efforts to promote a general Muslim uprising through intelligence and propaganda activities both in the Ottoman Empire and the colonial possessions of the Entente powers. Where appropriate, reference will be made to similar activities carried out by the British. The argument is that Germany overrated the power of Pan-Islam and falsely believed that an alliance with the Ottoman Empire would put this force at Germany's disposal, to be used as a weapon against the Entente powers. Britain, on the other hand, underrated Ottoman fighting strength and internal cohesion, and overrated the appeal of Arab nationalism to gain the support of the Ottoman Arabs for Britain's ends.

The study aims to find a convincing explanation for why both British and German policies and propaganda efforts failed to achieve the desired results. This appears to have been due to the inability of intelligence networks or agents to make their findings accepted by British or German policy-makers. This failure is all the more striking for the way intelligence findings revealed erroneous assumptions of German and British politicians.

Intelligence and propaganda did play an important role in the Middle Eastern theatre during the Great War. Both were influenced by the mistaken perceptions of non-industrial, non-European societies held by the Germans and the British. Intelligence and propaganda, in return, influenced the peoples of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Buchan, John: *Greenmantle*. London 1916, 6.

Middle East, who rather suddenly found themselves the target of those who would seek to manipulate their views and loyalties, but still treated them as pawns.

The intelligence and propaganda activities of Germany and the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East during the First World War have not yet been dealt with in a scholarly monograph. It is surprising that this highly interesting field of study has so far attracted so little interest. The First World War was a crucial period of transition for the Middle East, and the German and Ottoman propaganda campaigns were conducted at a time when the Ottoman Empire had managed to ally itself to a major European power. In this - its last - armed conflict the Ottoman Empire also attempted, with limited success, to enlist the support of Muslims all over the world for its cause. During the war the Ottoman Empire proved surprisingly resilient. Britain's endeavours to bring a quick end to the war in the Middle East failed. Neither Britain nor Germany managed to gain a clear, objective picture of the military, political, social and economic situation of the peoples of the Middle East, not so much from deficiencies in the intelligence-collecting apparatus (although there were many), but from a predisposition of the policy- and decision-makers to act on information which they felt to be inconvenient and against their preformed convictions. We may therefore assume that intelligence, or the lack thereof, played an important role in the Great War in the Middle East; the lack of an understanding of the needs and expectations of local populations in the Middle East and Muslims all over the worlds prevented German-Ottoman Pan-Islamic propaganda from being effective.

## The First World War

Until the most recent period a dominant characteristic of all First World War historiography, was its obsession with guilt and blame. It focused primarily on the following three issues: responsibility for the outbreak of war, responsibility for the outrageously high casualties, and the inability of the combatants to make peace once the failure of their contingency plans and the inevitability of a protracted war of attrition had been realised.

It is the absence of an obvious villain, such as Hitler, which makes the question of responsibility so difficult to answer. In the propaganda battle during the war, easy (and, depending on the reader's point of view, convincing) explanations for the outbreak of war were given. A peaceful Britain, committed to democracy, liberty and free trade had been called upon to save the world from being dominated by "Prussian militarism"; the first British war aim was to reestablish Belgian independence, which had been cruelly violated by the Germans. In turn, Germany witnessed the machinations of "perfidious Albion", resulting in Germany's (and Austria-Hungary's) "encirclement" by the Entente



powers, which eventually forced Germany to defend her liberty and independence by military means.<sup>2</sup>

In the treaty of Versailles the blame was laid on the shoulders of Germany. In more recent times historians have treated the question of responsibility for the outbreak of war in 1914 with more differentiation and have arrived at a number of possible answers.

Initially dominating was the school of historians arguing that the system of alliances and high imperialism evolving from the late 19th century onwards led to an explosive geopolitical atmosphere, in which the assassination of Austrian archduke Francis Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, would necessarily lead to full-scale war according to the domino principle.<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons why this view became quite widely adopted was that it offered a convenient excuse for prominent decision-makers to wash their hands of guilt for the outbreak of war.<sup>4</sup>

Since the publication of Fritz Fischer's works German historians, most prominently Immanuel Geiss, have refuted this idea in favour of Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of war. Fischer argued that Germany tried to establish "world power" by deliberately provoking war against the Entente powers, and particularly Britain, in the expectation of a German victory.<sup>5</sup> Elaborating on Fischer's study, Geiss chose the approach of demonstrating Germany's prominent involvement in European crises. He thus is prominent among those scholars who argue that the European system with its established powers France, Britain, Russia and Austria was unable to accommodate an aggressively expanding Germany, both within Europe and in other parts of the world. The struggle for resources and control of markets thereby inevitably led to the conflagration of the First World War.<sup>6</sup>

Other historians adopted a more structuralist view. They agreed that Germany played a pivotal role in the events leading to the outbreak of war, but drew attention to the fact that Germany, one of, if not the, major industrial power of Europe by 1914 suffered from profound internal problems and a dangerous power vacuum at the top.<sup>7</sup> This view has been challenged by Niall

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson, Niall: *The Pity of War*. London 1998, 216 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, Paul: *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. London 1988, 328; See also Taylor, A.J.P.: *The First World War: an Illustrated History*. Harmondsworth 1966.

<sup>4</sup> See Fallodon, Viscount Grey of: *Twenty-Five Years, 1892 – 1916*. 2 vols., London 1925; Bethmann Hollweg, Theobald von: *Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege*. 2 vols., Berlin 1919, reprint Essen 1989; Tirpitz, Alfred von: *Erinnerungen*. Leipzig 1920.

<sup>5</sup> Fischer, Fritz: *Griff nach der Weltmacht*. Düsseldorf 1961.

<sup>6</sup> Geiss, Immanuel: *Der lange Weg in die Katastrophe. Die Vorgeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges*. Munich 1990.

<sup>7</sup> See Ludwig, Emil: *Wilhelm der Zweite*. Berlin 1920; Craig, Gordon A.: *Deutsche Geschichte 1866 – 1945*. 3. ed. Munich 1980; Trumpener, Ulrich: "Germany and the End of the Ottoman Empire", in Kent, Marian: *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman*

Ferguson. He regards the conscious decision of the British government to become involved in the fighting on the continent as responsible for the war becoming a world war. Britain's economic strength also, in his view, enabled the Entente to hold out for over four years in the first place.<sup>8</sup>

The most recent publications aim at a symbiosis of the aforementioned positions. The study of the explosive atmosphere leading to the European powers to "slither into the cauldron of war" seems to have been soundly refuted by now. Attention is now paid predominantly to the "decision-making coterie", a small circle of politically influential individuals, which could, at any given time, decide in favour of declaring/entering the war or against it. Interestingly there appears to have been no difference between the democracies (Britain and France) or the more autocratic empires (Austria-Hungary, Russia and Germany).

This school has also refuted the study of one great aggressor (most often identified as Germany) to have been responsible for the conflagration. While Germany's issuing of a "carte blanche" to Austria (i.e. maintaining that Austria-Hungary's actions against Serbia, however aggressive, and fully unjustified if Serbia should accede to the Austrian-Hungarian ultimatum, would be given full German support) on July 6, 1914 certainly bears a large share for the outbreak of hostilities in the first place, Russia could have elected to stay neutral. Thus another, third, Balkan war would have ensued. In that case, there would not have been any need or desire for Germany to declare war on Russia and France. Britain could safely have stayed out of the conflict. This school ascribes responsibility for the outbreak of war to paranoia and sometimes almost criminal incompetence of the decision-makers involved; these flaws are also identified as the reason why there were no successful attempts to make peace once the impossibility of winning the war had been realized.<sup>9</sup> Yet the "atmospheric" school survives in the argument, that the machine of war, once put into motion, developed a life of its own and proved unstoppable once the enormous loss of life and material had made an answer to the question "What was it all for?" necessary. This, in turn, forced governments and military leaderships to keep fighting once either the social, economic and political fabric of a society was completely in shambles, with the outcome of revolution (as in the case of Russia), or the civilian or military leadership felt that the war was lost (as in the case of Germany).<sup>10</sup>

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Empire. London 1984; Leinveber, Generalmajor a.D.: *Mit Clausewitz durch die Irrungen und Wirrungen, Rätsel und Fragen des Weltkrieges*. Berlin 1926.

<sup>8</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 462.

<sup>9</sup> See f.e. Winter, Jay, Parker, Geoffrey, Habeck, Mary H. (eds.): *The Great War and the Twentieth Century*. New Haven, London 2000; Mommsen, Wolfgang J.: *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Anfang vom Ende des bürgerlichen Zeitalters*. Frankfurt 2004; Hamilton, Richard F., Herwig, Holger H.(eds.): *The Origins of World War I*. (Cambridge: Cambridge 2003.

<sup>10</sup> See f.e. Salewski, Michael: *Der Erste Weltkrieg*. Paderborn 2003.

In more recent times research on the First World War also has branched out into the field of the war experience of non-European peoples. These researchers have shifted from treating the war as a European armed conflict into which subject peoples of the European nations were drawn without a chance of resistance to a more balanced view of the relationship between imperial overlord and colonised subject. It has been realised that imperial rule and the very system of imperialism did not rely on force alone, but that the population in the colonies of the European powers consisted of many different groups and layers, each of which had its own, distinct relationship with the imperial power. Attitudes towards this power and its war effort differed greatly, ranging from supportive through benevolent or indifferent neutrality to hostile. This development has led to the realisation of the war truly being a world war, and the voices of subject peoples formerly unheeded or ignored, are now more widely taken into account. Melvin E. Page<sup>11</sup> and Ted Norris<sup>12</sup> in their works on the disruptive effects of the war on African societies give an example of a method hitherto not applied to the Ottoman Empire. This book, to a given extent, attempts to do so.<sup>13</sup>

### The First World War in the Middle East

Ferguson's theory that Germany was not the economic-military giant threatening the existing balance of power, but fairly weak and unable to constitute a credible threat to the existing status quo, offers a novel explanation for the conclusion of the German-Ottoman alliance on August 2, 1914.<sup>14</sup>

Germany's real or (self-) perceived weakness would explain the rather rash manner in which German diplomats endorsed an alliance with the Ottoman Empire, although German military personnel strongly advised against it. Yet Ferguson's argument may be debated. If Germany indeed felt weak and encircled, an alliance with the Ottoman Empire would not have been an efficient remedy. There was no reason to expect the Ottoman army to prove a valuable addition to the armed forces of the Central Powers; it was, in all likelihood, too weak, too disorganised and too poorly equipped to constitute a serious threat to Britain, France and Russia. The more likely reason was that Germany expected much from the Ottoman Empire's influence over Muslim opinion and, more important, Muslim actions in the Entente colonies. This might explain the

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<sup>11</sup> Page, Melvin E.(ed.): *Africa and the First World War*. London 1987.

<sup>12</sup> Norris, Ted: *The Great War: Insurgency as Grand Strategy*. Berlin 1990.

<sup>13</sup> The question of this point is of course, if and to what extent the Ottoman government was regarded as an "imperialist" government in the peripheral parts of the empire. For a discussion of this topic see f.e. Schäbler, Birgit: *Aufstände im Drusenbergländ*. Gotha 1996, esp. 107 – 203.

<sup>14</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 55.

greater enthusiasm shown by German diplomats than by military personnel for the alliance with the Ottoman Empire.

The military details of the First World War in the Middle East are well researched. The historical section of the Turkish General Staff has published a large amount of material, which is highly detailed. While these works are first-class reference material, even listing every pistol cartridge fired during the Gallipoli campaign, they are less useful for historical analysis.<sup>15</sup> Britain's campaigns in the Middle East also have been well documented, both in official histories<sup>16</sup> and scholarly works.<sup>17</sup> For the German side we have largely to rely on personal memoirs.<sup>18</sup> The campaign which has so far attracted most scholarly attention was that fought on the Gallipoli peninsula between April 1915 and January 1916.<sup>19</sup>

Strangely enough, most works on the Young Turks in general ignore the period from 1914 - 1918. Ernest Ramsaur's work only studies the development of the CUP until the revolution of 1908.<sup>20</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher's book somewhat avoids the period of the First World War and focuses on the role of the CUP in the

<sup>15</sup> See f.e. T.C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı: Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi. Osmanlı Devri, Birinci Dünya Harbi, İdari Faaliyetler ve Lojistik. Xncü Cilt, Ankara 1993; T.C. Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı, Askeri Tarih Yayınları, Seri no. 3: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi. IV Cilt, İnci Kısım. Sina-Filistin Cephesi. Harbin Başlangıcından İkinci Gazze Muharebeleri Sonuna Kadar. Ankara 1979; Genelkurmay Harp Tarihi Başkanlığı, Resmi Yayınları Seri no. 2: Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, IIIncü Cilt, 6ncı Kısım (1908 - 1920). Ankara 1971; Yılmaz, Veli: İnci Dünya Harbinde Türk-Alman İttifakı ve Askeri Yardımlar. İstanbul 1993; Görgülü, İsmet: On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu 1912 - 1922. Ankara 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Moberly, F.S.: The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914 - 1918. London 1923 - 1927; Bayliss, G.M. (ed.): Operations in Persia 1914 - 1919. London 1987; Massey, W.T.: The Desert Campaigns. London 1918; Bell, Archibald Colquhoun: A History of the Blockade of Germany and of the Countries Associated with her in the Great War, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, 1914 - 1918. London 1961; Mac Munn, Sir George: Military Operations, Egypt and Palestine. London 1928 - 1930; The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 - 1918. Sydney 1923 - 1942; Aspinall-Oglander, Cecil Faber: Military Operations, Gallipoli. London 1929; Falls, Cyril: Military Operations, Macedonia. London 1933 - 35.

<sup>17</sup> Dane, Edmund: British Campaigns in the Near East, 1914 - 1918. London, 1917; Ewing, W.: From Gallipoli to Baghdad. London 1917; Idriess, Ion L.: The Desert Column. Sydney 1932; Bullock, David L.: Allenby's War. London 1988.

<sup>18</sup> See f.e. Sanders, O.V.K. Liman von: Fünf Jahre Türkei. Berlin 1920; Goltz, Colmar Freiherr von der: Denkwürdigkeiten. 2. ed. Berlin 1929; Kressenstein, Friedrich Freiherr Kress von: Mit den Türken zum Suezkanal. Berlin 1939; Neulen, Hans-Werner: Feldgrau in Jerusalem. Das Levantekorps des kaiserlichen Deutschland. Munich 1991.

<sup>19</sup> See f.e. Günesen, Fikret: Çanakkale Savaşları. İstanbul 1986; Artaç, İbrahim: 1915 Çanakkale Savaşı. İstanbul 1992; Moorehead, Alan: Gallipoli. London 1956; Bennett, Jack: Gallipoli. London 1981; Snelling, Stephen: Gallipoli. Stroud 1995; Hickey, Michael: Gallipoli. London 1995; Steel, Nigel, Hart, Peter: Defeat at Gallipoli. London 1994.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest E. Ramsaur, *The Young Turks. Prelude to the Revolution of 1908*, (Beirut: Khayat, 1965).

development of a Turkish nationalist resistance movement. His study has great merit as it points clearly to the preparations made during the CUP period (1908 - 1918) for such a movement.<sup>21</sup>

There have been few historians writing on the Great War in the Middle East who had no political agenda. This is largely due to the troubled heritage of Britain's conquest of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In the course of the war Britain promised these territories to two interested parties (the Hashemites and the Zionists respectively) and in the end reserved control over them for herself (as mandatory power). This has led to heated debates and eventually a long-lasting regional conflict.

In summer 1916, after the military disasters of Gallipoli and Kut al-'Amara the British tentatively agreed to grant the Arabs, represented by Sharif Husayn of Mecca, national independence in parts of the Arab provinces. French pressure to be allotted a share of the conquered territories led to the Sykes-Picot agreement granting France command over Lebanon and (modern) Syria. The Balfour declaration in 1917 committed Britain to foster the establishment of a "national home" for the Jews in the territory of Palestine; the Arab-Israeli conflict continues today with undiminished ferocity. It is thus not surprising that Arab<sup>22</sup> and Zionist historians, depending on their backgrounds, have tended to exaggerate the justification of their respective communities' claims for territory by drawing attention to their communities' contribution to the British victory in the Middle East.<sup>23</sup> More neutral writers have accused Britain of double- or even triple-dealing,<sup>24</sup> and of naiveté, making promises which were impossible to fulfill. Few writers have, however, realised that Britain's manifold commitments were mostly the result of the British government's believing it necessary to gain allies in the region. To their great consternation and chagrin, British arms for most of the war were not capable of defeating the Ottoman Empire single-handedly.

## Intelligence in the Great War

By 1914 the intelligence services of the Great Powers were still in their infancy. Britain had founded MI5 and MI6 in 1909, and was followed by Germany and France shortly afterwards. Historians who deal with the development of intelligence services into the huge agencies with multi-million dollar budgets of

<sup>21</sup> Zürcher, Erik Jan: *The Unionist Factor*. Leiden 1984.

<sup>22</sup> Antonius, George: *The Arab Awakening*. London 1938; Zeine, Zeine N.: *The Struggle for Arab Independence. Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria*. Beirut 1960; Khalidi, Rashid et al (eds.): *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*. New York 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Engle, Anita: *The NILI Spies*. London 1959; Verrier, Anthony: *Agents of Empire*. London 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Fromkin, David: *A Peace to End all Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914 - 1922*. London, New York 1989.

today usually dismiss intelligence services in the Great War as of little importance for the war-time policies of their governments. They are described as amateurish, under-staffed and under-funded, and often hardly capable of acquiring any information, let alone analyse it properly.<sup>25</sup>

The abysmal performance of German spies in Britain, as described by Philip Knightley, Christopher Andrew and Jeffrey Richelson is a point in case. Andrew's detailed description of the mistakes made by German spies in Britain almost gives German intelligence a pathetic character. Andrew and Knightley both draw attention to the fact that the very foundation of British intelligence services was due to a spy scare engineered by, among others, the charlatans William LeQueux and Horatio Bottomley. They maintained and managed to convince their audience that Germany planned an invasion of the British isles in case of war (which Germany had abandoned as early as 1895) and that there were anything from several thousand to several tens of thousands of Germans living in Britain as spies and "fifth columnists." The quotations at the beginning of Knightley's work (LeQueux maintains the existence of more than 5,000 German spies in Britain; the official record shows 21, of whom only one stood trial) show clearly how grotesquely exaggerated such British fears of German espionage and an invasion by German forces were.<sup>26</sup> Most authors have, in fact, concentrated on the rather embarrassing failures of the intelligence services, both in the field of political and military intelligence.<sup>27</sup>

There are consequently only a handful of scholarly works that attempt to analyse First World War intelligence operations in greater detail. Only certain personalities have attracted more attention, such as the head of the Austro-Hungarian *Evidenzbureau* (intelligence office), Colonel Redl, who was convicted of having sold the Austrian-Hungarian contingency plans to Russia, and the Dutch courtesan and "spy" Mata Hari. Most publications come to a fairly devastating verdict: Redl was a homosexual with expensive habits, whose material, supplied to the Russians through blackmail, was next to useless.<sup>28</sup> Mata Hari was in fact an ageing society girl who was never employed by any intelligence service, and who was only executed by the French in 1917 due to

<sup>25</sup> Andrew, Christopher: *Secret Service. The Making of the British Intelligence Community*. London 1985; Buchheit, Gert: *Der deutsche Geheimdienst*. Munich 1966; Knightley, Philip: *The Second Oldest Profession*. London 1986; Richelson, Jeffrey T.: *A Century of Spies - Intelligence in the Twentieth Century*. New York, Oxford 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Knightley, *Second Oldest Profession*, p.3; Le Queux, William: *England's Peril. A Story from the Secret Service*. London 1900; Le Queux, William: *Secrets of the Foreign Office*. London 1903; Le Queux, William: *German Spies in England*. London 1915.

<sup>27</sup> Morris, Peter: "Intelligence and its Interpretation. Mesopotamia 1914 - 1916", in Andrew, Christopher, Noakes, Jeremy (eds.): *Intelligence and International Relations, 1900 - 1945*. Exeter 1987, 77 - 101.

<sup>28</sup> See f.e. the film of Szabó, Istvan: *Colonel Redl*. Vienna 1984. For a more scholarly discussion of Redl see Pethő, Albert, "Oberst Redl", in Krieger, Wolfgang (ed.): *Geheimdienste in der Weltgeschichte*. Munich 2003, 138 - 150.

the excessively gloomy atmosphere in France and the hatred against persons suspected of spying.<sup>29</sup>

There was only one great intelligence coup during the Great War, and that was a coup scored by British naval intelligence in the field of signals intelligence. "Room 40", the section of British naval intelligence dealing with radio intercepts from Germany, managed to decipher the telegram sent by German foreign secretary Zimmermann to the German ambassador in Mexico in late 1916. It offered German weapons and funds to the previously ousted Mexican dictator General Huerta in exchange for a Mexican attack on the United States. Through skillful use of this information the British eventually managed to bring about the American declaration of war against Germany in April, 1917.<sup>30</sup>

Most scholarly works regard the First World War as a period during which intelligence services were still amateurishly run and consequently inefficient and fairly negligible in their importance. They devote most of their attention to intelligence operations in the Second World War and after. German literature of the 1920s dealing with intelligence operations during the Great War hardly mentions the Middle Eastern war theatre at all. In the fairly monumental *Die Weltkriegsspionage* (Espionage in the Great War) of 1930 there is less than one page dedicated to espionage in the Middle East; it describes superficially the activities of two German agents and stresses that the Germans never used women as spies, thereby being somewhat less than highly informative.<sup>31</sup>

Colonel Walter Nicolai, director of section IIIb of the German general staff (responsible for intelligence and propaganda) wrote two books in the early 1920s that deal primarily with intelligence operations in France and in Russia. Likewise Nicolai's article in Moritz Schwarte's huge work *Der Weltkrieg* (The World War) does not mention intelligence operations in the Middle East at all. Why are there so few reports about German intelligence operations in the Middle East? The answer seems to lie in a primary source. The report written by retired Major-General Gempp in the 1930s, *Der Geheime Nachrichtendienst im Weltkriege* (The Secret Intelligence Service in the World War)<sup>32</sup> states that there was no organised German intelligence service in the Middle East. There were isolated intelligence officers attached to the headquarters of Ottoman units (one example, a short report about intelligence operations on the Caucasus front, is

<sup>29</sup> See Coulson, Thomas: *Mata Hari, Courtesan and Spy*. New York, London 1930; Waagenaar, Sam: *Mata Hari*. New York 1965.

<sup>30</sup> See Beesly, Patrick: *Room 40: British Naval Intelligence, 1914 – 1918*. London 1982; Tuchman, Barbara: *The Zimmermann Telegram*. 2. ed. London 1967.

<sup>31</sup> Goltz, Colmar Freiherr von der: „Spionage in der Türkei“, in Lettow-Vorbeck, Paul von (ed.): *Die Weltkriegsspionage*. Munich 1931, 178.

<sup>32</sup> Federal Archive/Military Archive Freiburg. File RW5/40 - 45. Major-General Gempp. *Der Geheime Nachrichtendienst im Weltkriege* (The Secret Intelligence Service in the World War).

attached to Gemp's work), but German intelligence, as far as an organised service is concerned, were restricted to Rumania and Bulgaria. The Middle East proper appears to have been covered only by the Ottoman intelligence services, on which sadly almost nothing has been published. Dr. Philip H. Stoddard's brilliant unpublished PhD. study remains to this day the best and most informative work on Enver Paşa's private intelligence service, the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (TM).<sup>33</sup> This work has been translated into Turkish and published in Istanbul.<sup>34</sup> There is a small number of other publications dealing with the TM, regarding it as the predecessor of Turkey's present secret service, the M.I.T.<sup>35</sup> The memoirs of Eşref Kuşubaşı, the most experienced field director of the TM have also been published. The book concentrates on Ottoman counter-insurgency operations after the outbreak of the Arab revolt in the Hijaz.<sup>36</sup> The official Turkish sources dealing with the First World War in general pay hardly any attention to intelligence; they describe the gathering of military intelligence, but not intelligence networks; they also do not mention the TM.<sup>37</sup>

Thus the only works dealing with German and Ottoman intelligence operations in the Middle East do not analyse the entire background of these operations, but focus on isolated operations. The German Iran- and Afghanistan-Expeditions have attracted some scholarly attention, both from German and British authors, as have the German missions sent to the Shi'ite Mujtahids of Najaf and Karbala.<sup>38</sup>

There are considerably more publications dealing with British intelligence operations in the Middle East. Most of them, however, revolve about the figure of T.E.Lawrence and his role during the Arab revolt. A tradition in British "intelligence writing" already observable in the immediate pre-war period is, however, continued - fictional writing. John Buchan's "Greenmantle" deals exactly with the topic of this study; the Germans try to bring about a *jihad* by

<sup>33</sup> Stoddard, Philip H.: The Ottoman Government and the Arabs: A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. Unpublished PhD. Thesis Princeton 1963.

<sup>34</sup> Stoddard, Philip H.: Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. Istanbul 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Hiçyılmaz, Ergün: Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa ve Casusluk Örgütleri. Istanbul 1996; Hiçyılmaz, Ergün: Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan MIT'e. Istanbul 1990.

<sup>36</sup> Stoddard, Philip H., Danışman, Basri (eds.): Eşref Kuşubaşı: Hayber'de Türk Cengi. Istanbul 1997.

<sup>37</sup> See Genelkurmay Harp Tarihi Başkanlığı: Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, IIIüncü Cilt, 6ncı Kısım (1908 - 1920). Ankara 1986, 380 - 387.

<sup>38</sup> Sykes, Christopher: Wassmuss, the German Lawrence. London, New York, 1936; Vogel, Renate: Die Persien- und Afghanistanexpedition Oskar Ritter von Niedermayers. PhD. Thesis Osnabrück 1976; Ende, Werner: "Iraq in WWI - the Germans, the Turks and the Shi'ite Mujtahid's Call for Jihad", in Peters, Rudolf (ed.): Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants. Leiden 1981; Steuben, Fritz: Die Karawane am Persergolfe. 2. ed. Stuttgart 1935.



using a (Mahdi-like) prophet, only to be frustrated in their plans by a small party of British officers.<sup>39</sup>

Modern scholarship has begun to investigate British intelligence in the Middle East, yet has so far almost entirely focused on military, operational intelligence. Yigal Sheffy has written on British Military Intelligence during the Palestine campaign, and John Ferris has analysed signals intelligence in the Middle East in some detail.<sup>40</sup> What is still lacking is a scholarly work analysing how political intelligence gathered in the Middle East influenced - or failed to influence - the policies of the Germans and the British. This study aims to fill this gap, by focusing on the endeavours of the Germans and the Ottomans to acquire information about the politico-ideological convictions of the Middle East, and how they used this information in their attempts to influence these peoples' actions for their own ends.

### Propaganda in the First World War - the German-Ottoman *Jihad* Propaganda

While scholars have differed in the past,<sup>41</sup> the term "propaganda" has increasingly come to be defined in terms of any "organised intellectual effort to effect behavioural change of groups or individuals."<sup>42</sup> This definition appears convincing for the German-Ottoman propaganda effort to create a *jihad* of Muslims within and without the Ottoman Empire directed against Britain, France and Russia.

During the First World War propaganda acquired greater importance than during any previous conflict in history. The emergence of a framework of international morality which was supposed to rule the relations of states and nations was responsible for this great importance of propaganda. As Harold D. Lasswell noted, the

"...psychological resistances to war in modern nations were so great that every armed conflict had to represent a war of defence against a menacing, murderous aggressor. There must be no ambiguity about whom the public is to hate. The war must not be due to a world system of conducting international affairs, nor to the stupidity or malevolence of all governing classes, but to the rapacity of the enemy...If the propagandist is to mobilise the hatred of the people, he must see to it that everything is

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<sup>39</sup> Buchan, Greenmantle.

<sup>40</sup> Sheffy, Yigal: British Military Intelligence in the Palestine Campaign 1914 - 1918. London 1997; Ferris, John (ed.): The British Army and Signals Intelligence during the First World War. Stroud 1992.

<sup>41</sup> See f.e. Ellul, Jacques: Propagandes. Paris 1962; Jackall, Robert (ed.): Propaganda. Basingstoke 1995; Thomson, Oliver: Easily Led. A History of Propaganda. Stroud 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Thomson, Easily Led, 2.

circulated which establishes the sole responsibility of the enemy."<sup>43</sup>

This definition of the purposes of propaganda also was applicable to the discussion of Pan-Islam by European imperialists. The phenomenon of Pan-Islam was ascribed to deliberate anti-Western, anti-imperialist Islamic propaganda by the colonial powers in the years prior to and during the First World War. Representatives of these powers frequently regarded "Islam" as a potential weapon against the infidel imperialist powers. The frequent use of Islamic terminology in local resistance movements, as well as the attempt of sultan Abdülhamid II to use Pan-Islam for his own ends, appeared to bear this out. While European observers were not mistaken about Abdülhamid II's intentions they probably exaggerated the appeal of the sultan's Pan-Islamic policies for Muslims living outside the Ottoman Empire. The sultan certainly had some successes, such as having Friday prayers read in his name in Indian mosques, or the donation of funds by Muslims living outside the Ottoman Empire for charitable projects within Turkey. With some right the sultan was pleased with his successes; he had raised the awareness of non-Ottoman Muslims for Turkey's plight and consequently caused the colonial powers anguish, arguably preventing them from adopting even more aggressive policies against the Ottoman Empire than they already had. The German-Ottoman propaganda efforts during the First World War were quite another proposition. They wished to effect "behavioural change" among Muslim communities in the Entente colonies, to encourage Muslims living peacefully under Entente rule to join the *jihad* against their rulers and embark on military operations.

There are several works dealing with the topic of Islam as a factor in anti-colonial struggle. Rudolf Peters has managed to formulate a "doctrine of *jihad* in modern history." B.G. Martin has researched the role played by Muslim brotherhoods in anti-colonial movements in 19th century Africa.<sup>44</sup> Yet Muslim brotherhoods also were known to cooperate with the colonial invaders if the leaders of the brotherhood thought this served their interests.<sup>45</sup>

The *jihad* proclaimed by the highest Ottoman religious functionary, the *Shaykhülislam*, on 14 November, 1914 has so far attracted little scholarly attention. At the time of its proclamation it provoked a number of outraged or ironic comments from neutral observers and Entente propagandists. The Dutch Oriental scholar Christiaan Snouck-Hurgronje termed the *jihad* a "Holy War made in Germany", and drew attention to the fact that both C.H.Becker and

<sup>43</sup> Lasswell, Harold D.: *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. London 1927, 47.

<sup>44</sup> Holt, P.M.: *The Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881 - 1898. A Study of its Development and Overthrow*. Oxford 1970.

<sup>45</sup> Peters, Rudolf: *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*. The Hague 1979; Martin, B.G.: *Muslim Brotherhoods in 19th-century Africa*. Cambridge 1976; Abun-Nasr, Jamil N.: *The Tijaniyya. A Sufi Order in the Modern World*. Oxford 1965.

Martin Hartmann, two of the leading German Oriental scholars of the day, had both refuted the idea of the existence, let alone the appeal, of Pan-Islam.<sup>46</sup> In more recent times Gottfried Hagen's MA study *Die Türkei im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Turkey in the First World War) with its wealth of propaganda material and its elaborate textual criticism forms the best work on the *jihad* of 1914, based mainly on German-Ottoman propaganda leaflets in Arabic.<sup>47</sup> It lacks, however, a discussion of the circumstances of the proclamation and of the probability of success for German-Ottoman Pan-Islamic propaganda, which is what this study proposes to do.

### **The Framework of Measuring Successes and Failures of the Jihad-Propaganda:**

Success of a propaganda campaign may be measured in two stages. First, there is the question of how well the propagandist succeeds in "getting the message across", i.e. if the propagandist manages to make his message recognised by the targeted individual or group of individuals. The success of this operation is largely dependent on the available media and the capacity of the opposition to control them. During the First World War propaganda material had to be transported physically to the populations or individuals it wished to address. Control of postal communications, searching of vessels and individual travelers as well as press censorship was thus, in our example, an efficient way to combat the spread of German and Ottoman propaganda messages in the Entente colonies.

Another limit for distribution of propaganda is the literacy of the targeted population. The overwhelming majority of the Ottoman population and Muslims in the Entente colonies was illiterate. Thus written material could only achieve its aim among the "masses" if there was a literate person to act as reader and interpreter. Where such a helpful person was lacking, one may safely assume that those propaganda pamphlets given to Ottoman soldiers possibly saw better use as cigarette paper or for lighting cooking fires.<sup>48</sup>

Also, local elites with specific self-interest had to be enlisted for the spreading of propaganda messages, which took a good part of control over the propaganda warfare in the target zones from the hands of the German or Ottoman creators of written propaganda material.

<sup>46</sup> See Snouck-Hurgronje, Christiaan: *Holy War made in Germany*. New York 1915; Stuermer, Harry: *Two War Years in Constantinople*. London 1917, 136 – 161.

<sup>47</sup> Hagen, Gottfried: *Die Türkei im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Frankfurt 1990.

<sup>48</sup> Examples of such propaganda leaflets survive in several archives. See Imperial War Museum, London. Private Papers of Sir Gerard Clauson, Box 80/47/1 and Box 80/47/2; Heidelberg University Library, Collection of First World War Propaganda Leaflets in Oriental Languages *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg*, No. B2529 Folio; German Federal Archive/Military Archive, Freiburg, File RM40/V. 678; Political Archive of the German Foreign Office, Files *Unternehmungen gegen unsere Feinde in Ägypten, Indien...* (Operations Against Our Enemies in Egypt, India etc.), No. R21123 - R21143.

The second method of determining if propaganda was successful or not is connected with the "behavioural change" the propagandist desires to effect. This method works far better in the negative than in the positive. If behavioural change occurs, propaganda might have been one reason, but most often there are other reasons, of far greater importance, which have effected the change. Yet if no such change occurs at all, or if the change is not what the propaganda effort desired, the verdict is clear: the propaganda did not work. Reasons for such failure may be attributed, amongst other reasons, to shortcomings in the planning and execution of the propaganda campaign.

Propaganda, as well as deception of the enemy in wartime, is always most successful when the message reinforces pre-existing beliefs and attitudes in the targeted group of individuals.<sup>49</sup> It also has to be timed accurately. The greatest successes of propaganda campaigns are observable when there is a troubled, potentially unstable atmosphere in which the propagandist suddenly injects a clearly defined message, which is then enthusiastically accepted. The crusades were preached for at a time when economic hardship had to some extent destabilised most western societies, and also when a certain apocalyptic millenarianism (which we shall re-encounter when discussing Pan-Islamic propaganda) still held large sections of the population in thrall.

Yet it is of course not only the social, economic and political conjuncture which determines the success of a propaganda campaign. There is also the question of the propaganda message itself, and of its relation with reality. The French war slogan of 1940 "We shall win because we are stronger" was "uninspiring because it was unconvincing."<sup>50</sup> German and Ottoman boasts of military superiority and the certainty of an eventual victory of the Central Powers failed to appeal to the emotions of Muslims, as the promised results of German-Ottoman military campaigns - forcing the French, British and Russians to their knees - was not forthcoming in Europe or at the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. These were classical examples of propaganda without credibility. Lying and distortion, on the other hand, were employed to good effect by the Entente propagandists, who attacked nebulous, metaphysical evils represented or committed by the enemy. They appealed successfully to their target populations' hearts, not heads, as the Germans did. An irate German wrote to Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe, in 1921:

"German propaganda was in spirit the propaganda of scholars, privy councillors and professors. How could these honest and unworldly men cope with devils of journalism, experts in mass poisoning like yourself? German propaganda, what there was of it, was addressed to the reason, to the intelligence, the

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<sup>49</sup> Jackall, *Propaganda*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Thomson, *Easily Led*, 72.

conscience...How could such dry stuff as facts cope with the gaudy yarns, the hate hypnotism, the crude...sensations you dished up. The German steadfastly refused to descend to your level."<sup>51</sup>

The same attitude was exhibited by the 93 German scholars and intellectuals who joined forces in 1914 and published the pamphlet "An die Kulturwelt (To the World of Culture!)." As Ungern-Sternberg argues, this call to "reason", this attempt to justify Germany's actions, produced the opposite effect from the one it had intended: instead of making the "world of culture" outside Germany see the justice of Germany's case, the absolute conviction in this very justice attracted scorn and probably damaged Germany's standing in the eyes of the critical readers.<sup>52</sup>

The point here is that one must know the target population well if propaganda is to be credible, hence effective. Ideally "propagandists should be individuals with a capacity to view themselves as "objects in a world of objects", meaning that the propagandist should be able to see and feel like his target population.<sup>53</sup> This good advice was frequently ignored by the German propagandists engaged in Pan-Islamic propaganda during the First World War. On examination of the material they produced one cannot help but note that their views towards Muslim populations were condescending and high-handed. Considering the sacrifices German-Ottoman propaganda demanded from those it called upon, the German propaganda leaflets, although far more informative than the Ottoman ones, paid little attention to the important topic to make Muslims *feel* an obligation to join the *jihad*; even if we rule out a general lack of faith of the German propagandists in the potential success of their work, it turns out that there were few, if any, skillful manipulators amongst them, no-one who fitted Lasswell's demands for a good propagandist:

"Calculating the prospect of securing a permanent change in habits and values involves much more than the estimation of the preferences of men in general. It means taking into account the tissue of relations in which men are webbed, searching for signs of preference that may reflect no deliberation and directing a program toward a solution that fits in fact. Such an approach places a premium upon candour and hard thinking rather than hypocrisy and formality."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 213.

<sup>52</sup> Ungern-Sternberg, "An die Kulturwelt!", 4.

<sup>53</sup> Lasswell, Harold D.: "Propaganda", in Jackall, *Propaganda*, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Lasswell, "Propaganda", in Jackall, *Propaganda*, 24.

The German and Ottoman intelligence and propaganda activities during the First World War appear to be understudied. This may have to do with the difficulty of locating primary sources. Arguably the paucity of sources is more a problem for the study of intelligence operations than propaganda.

### **The Sources:**

Research about intelligence operations in general, and about intelligence and propaganda operations during the First World War in particular, is fishing in muddy waters. This study is to a large extent based on source materials found in various German archives. Sadly, twice during the course of the 20th century this source material has been reduced considerably. Many of the files dealing with German intelligence operations during the war of 1914 - 1918 were destroyed at the end of 1918, probably with the intention of preventing this information from falling into the hands of the Entente nations and to protect German agents and operatives from "victor's justice." More devastating was the loss of a large amount of the German military files during the bombing of Berlin in 1945, in which most of the German General Staff archives and documents concerning the land army in general were lost. The remaining documents relevant to the topic of the book therefore are fragmented and scattered. As the German Foreign Office was the institution most closely connected with the German Pan-Islamic propaganda effort, and also played an important role in the collection of intelligence, its archives provide the main body of archival material used in this study. The Political Archive of the German Foreign Office/Bonn contains two series of files, which have been used exclusively.

Most valuable has been the private archive of the Oppenheim Bank, Cologne, which furnished the complete autobiography of Max von Oppenheim. Oppenheim dictated this autobiography, which is unpublished, uncatalogued and quite fragmented, to his private secretary several months before his death in September 1946. The memoir provides valuable information on the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* (Intelligence Office for the East) and Oppenheim's role in the negotiations between the Ottoman government and the Hashemite Sharif Faysal ibn Husayn in Constantinople. Together with the impressive amount of information about prominent personalities of the period which Oppenheim collected, this memoir is one of the most important sources for this study.

Additional German material was found in the Federal Archive/Military Archive, Freiburg im Breisgau. Most of the files deal with the operations of German naval personnel in the Ottoman Empire. Only very few documents of the land army relevant for the topic were found. A notable exception was the report drawn up by Major-General Gempp during 1935/36 for the staff colleges of the newly established Wehrmacht. Major-General Gempp unfortunately dedicated only about 20 pages to the subject.

The Prussian Secret State Archive/Berlin-Dahlem and the German Federal Archive/ Berlin-Lichterfelde offered only scarce information mostly concerned with the field of German cultural propaganda in the Ottoman Empire.

The reports of the Austro-Hungarian military representative, Feldmarschalleutnant Josef Pomiankowski, offered valuable insight into the results of the German-Ottoman Pan-Islamic propaganda campaign in the Ottoman Empire and Arabia, and also information about popular attitudes to the Ottoman war effort.

Most of the Ottoman Turkish material was found in the Başbakanlık Arşivi, Istanbul. It mostly consists of telegrams between the Ministry of the Interior and Ottoman government officials in the provinces and occasionally refers to espionage or counterespionage. Some information was gleaned from the Private Papers of Sir Gerard Clauson in the Imperial War Museum Archive. Sir Gerard was an intelligence officer at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia and had collected not only information, but also a sizeable number of Ottoman documents from Ottoman officers fallen in battle or Ottoman prisoners of war. In the PRO/London, some files containing intelligence summaries from Mesopotamia were examined. These files were valuable as they also contained interrogations of Ottoman prisoners of war and deserters.

Although it would have been highly desirable, no access could be gained to the Archive of the Turkish General Staff (Genelkurmay Arşivi) in Ankara. Yet a note to be found in Philip H. Stoddard's study indicated that this archive did not yield the expected documents, either due to legal or organisational reasons.<sup>55</sup>

### The Structure:

The field of intelligence and propaganda during the First World War is a vast topic; in order to deal with this huge field successfully a single study has to be selective in its focus. The aim is to give the reader a comparative overview of German and Ottoman intelligence and propaganda activities in the Middle East and their respective results.

The structure roughly follows a method which Clausewitz proposed for criticism of wars and campaigns through the ages. The method proceeds in three steps. First, the collection of a body of historical evidence and clarification of doubtful matters (the story of intelligence and propaganda in the Middle East during the First World War, chapters 2 - 5). Second, the connection of actions with results (i.e., how did intelligence collected by the Ottomans and the Germans affect decision-making; what were the results of the respective propaganda efforts), and, third, the examination of the means employed by these

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<sup>55</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 232.

countries to achieve their strategic objectives (chapter 6 and conclusion).<sup>56</sup> The historical introduction covers the evolving German-Ottoman alliance, the events leading up to the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war in November 1914 and internal Ottoman developments since the late nineteenth century, focusing strongly on the discovery of the potential power of Pan-Islam in the days of sultan Abdülhamid II and its proposed use by the triumvirate.

The Germans and the Ottomans attempted to create a *jihad*, while the British were desirous of preventing its outbreak. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the European preoccupation with *jihad* and to the means by which Germany and the Ottoman Empire tried to create a *jihad* in various areas. It also examines how they obtained the information on which they based their actions to achieve this. In comparison, British operations to prevent the outbreak of *jihad* are analysed. Chapter 3 examines several case studies of such activities in greater detail.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on German and Ottoman propaganda operations. Chapter 4 describes the establishment of propaganda institutions and networks, the cooperation by the Germans with Egyptian, Indian and Iranian nationalist committees in Berlin, and the activities of the German intelligence office for the East are dealt with; the following chapter then covers the activities of propaganda agents in the field.

Chapter 6 leads up to the conclusion in its concentration on the results of these activities in the Middle East. It deals with the question, if intelligence was able to furnish the Germans, British or Ottomans with vital information suitable to shorten the war, and if German and Ottoman Pan-Islamic propaganda did produce noticeable, or even decisive, rebellions against British, French and Russian colonial rule. The answer on both counts is negative; the conclusion of this study therefore has to attempt to find reasons for this failure.

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<sup>56</sup> Leinveber, Mit Clausewitz..., p.23.



## **Chapter 1 - Historical Introduction:**

In the decade before 1914 European statesmen dealt considerably more with the problems of Great Power rivalry than with revolts or rebellions in their colonies. European domination appeared unchallengeable. When American Indian (Paiute) mystic Wovoka exhorted his followers "not to refuse to work for the whites" and not to "make any trouble with them", his sentiments might have been echoed by colonised peoples all over the globe, who were living in the colonial empires of Britain, France, Russia, and, very few of them, in that of Germany.<sup>1</sup>

As far as Britain was concerned the reestablishment of Anglo-Egyptian rule in the Sudan in 1898/9, and the British victory in the second Boer War (1899 - 1902) had, for the time being, established peace in the British Empire. Nationalism in the colonies was still a minority movement, and British supremacy seemed firmly established. Threats to the British Empire were not yet dynastic ambitions of local rulers or nationalist revolts, but supra-national identities, which might be exploited in order to raise the awareness of the populations in the colonies of the undesirability of a continuation of imperial rule. One of the most noteworthy of these was Pan-Islam. We shall see that Pan-Islam was used by the Ottomans as a weapon, and greatly feared by the British. As far as the Germans were concerned, they had little exact knowledge about the strength of Pan-Islam, its appeal or even its proponents; yet for an enthusiastic, if slightly exuberant personality as Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, the German diplomat who was to influence German policies towards the Middle East most pronouncedly during the First World War, it seemed clear that Pan-Islam could be made to serve German interests; the lack of any means to check if the baron's views were correct meant that the Germans embarked on a lengthy and quite costly, but eventually futile Pan-Islamic propaganda campaign.

### **The Ottoman Empire since the revolution of 1908**

From the Great Powers' point of view the situation of the Ottoman Empire during the Hamidian period (1876 - 1908) was comfortable. The sultan was reported to feel "hatred for Russia, contempt for France and fear of Great Britain;" this implied that, if a common action of several Great Powers took place, the sultan always could be expected to oblige them. Turkey accordingly was to be kept in a position of semi-dependence.<sup>2</sup>

All this changed with the ascension to power of the Young Turks (Committee of Union and Progress, henceforth CUP) in 1908. Even if Abdülhamid had become an extremely unpopular monarch (even more in

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/wpages/wpags400/w4wovoka.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Kent, Marian: "The Late Ottoman Empire", in Kent, Marian (ed.): *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*. London 1984, 11.

Europe than in the Ottoman Empire by 1908), the European powers had known how to deal with him. Now Ottoman leadership, by no means uncontested, had fallen to a semi-secret committee comprised of various unknown elements. Although according to CUP proclamations the only wish of the committee had been to force the sultan to reintroduce the Constitution suspended in 1876, it soon emerged that it was not willing to follow peacefully the course set by the sultan. Regardless of which faction, one thing at least was clear about the new strong men of Turkey: they were fervent patriots whose aim would be the strengthening and defending of the Ottoman Empire, if not to regain previously lost territories.

Given the economic, demographic and political condition of the Ottoman Empire this was a Herculean task. Nationalism, which had gradually been growing in the Balkans during the nineteenth century, manifested itself more aggressively than ever, Bulgaria putting the temporary weakness of the government in the capital to good use by declaring her independence shortly after the Young Turkish coup. Austria-Hungary availed itself of the situation by annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina, which it had effectively administered since 1878. But the years following 1908 were marked by a succession of far more serious threats to the survival of the Ottoman Empire than it had ever experienced before.

As Niyazi Berkes has argued, the Young Turks, especially the emerging "Turkists", adopted an attitude to the West different to that of their predecessors, insofar as they were more hostile and aloof to the West than the openly "Westernist" liberal thinkers. While the Young Turks accepted that there was much in the West which was worth borrowing, they still maintained that the West had to be regarded as expansionist and therefore had to be kept at bay. In their view the world order would only become "truly humanitarian and international" when "non-western and non-Christian nations were accepted into its fold after they had reached the stage of joining Western civilisation by becoming true nations."<sup>3</sup> Yet on the eve of the Great War the Great Powers showed little inclination of doing so. As pragmatists, the Young Turks accepted that the world order was created and dominated by the Great Powers. The predominant feature of this world order was economic and military power as a basis of legitimacy, or, in more prosaic words, that "might was right." This paradigm had repercussions both for the physical side of the world order - namely, that industrialised European nations dominated territories whose indigenous regimes and social systems lacked the capacity to resist efficiently - and the metaphysical thought behind it. Strength was seen as a proof for the respective system's superiority. For the weaker countries in this world order the result was obviously that the only way to achieve parity, and thus independence, was to borrow from the West, again both physically (material, technological

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<sup>3</sup> Berkes, Niyazi: *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. Montreal 1964, 356.

innovation, political and social structures) and metaphysically, referring to the vast area of cultural changes.

In general, Ottoman reformers throughout the nineteenth century had looked for support for their reform programs from Western countries, most often from Britain, sometimes also from Germany or France. The Young Turks, on the other hand, were more pragmatic insofar as they recognised the aggressive nature of Western expansionism; instead of relying on a benevolent "mission civilisatrice" by the Western powers, the Ottoman Empire had to be made capable of resisting the Western encroachment, if necessary by force.

The Young Turks realised that they were powerless to counter these threats in kind, the Ottoman Empire being neither militarily nor economically able to conduct a successful defence. The rather successful campaign in Tripolitania against the Italians in 1911 had to be brought to a premature end due to the outbreak of the First Balkan War. The Young Turks, even if initially a "democratic" movement gradually developed more authoritarian and uncompromising policies, with which they intended to redress the imbalance between the Ottoman Empire and its enemies. External weakness, in their thought, resulted from internal weaknesses; in order to strengthen the Empire the reins of government would have to be tightened.

Although this idea in itself was sensible, its implementation could only lead to trouble with the remaining ethnic or religious minorities in the Empire, who had grown used to a high degree of autonomy and were unwilling to subject themselves to the strong rule of the central government. Consequently, in the long run, the CUP grew even more unpopular with large sections of the population than Abdülhamid had ever been; it faced not only external, but also internal enemies. The Ottoman government therefore, in the years immediately preceding and during the First World War, had to move simultaneously on two tracks: on the one hand, it had to reform the economic and military capacities of the Ottoman Empire to enable it to survive further attacks from the Great Powers; on the other hand, the Ottoman Empire had to be strengthened by centralisation and a gradual increase of governmental control even in the peripheral areas of the Empire. Recent scholarship suggests that this project was skilfully executed, minor impediments such as localised revolts notwithstanding.<sup>4</sup> Yet one problem remained; governmental control might have been assured, but it was still in many areas seen as alien by the local population. The general difficulty the Ottomans faced in the Arab provinces was that loyalty of the population either had to be bought by various measures (usually economic advantages) or to be secured by brute force; there was no strong feeling of loyalty to the state which might have brought people to sacrifice

<sup>4</sup> See f.e. Bailey, Clinton: "The Ottomans and the Bedouin Tribes of the Negev", in Gilbar, Gad G.(ed.): Ottoman Palestine 1800 - 1914. Leiden 1990, 321 - 332; Rogan, Eugene L.: Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire. Transjordan, 1850 - 1921. Cambridge 1999; Schäbler, Birgit: Aufstände im Drusenbergländ. Gotha 1996.

economic gains, let alone their lives, for the sake of the Ottoman Empire. Clearly some bond had to be forged between peoples of different religions and races; in the absence of the factors which permitted the rise of nationalism in Europe (especially common language, ethnicity or religion) successive Ottoman governments during the nineteenth century had, with only limited success, toyed with a variety of ideologies. The CUP was to follow this pattern, too.

While the liberal Tanzimat reformers of the nineteenth century had been convinced that Ottoman power could best be increased by the creation of an Ottoman bourgeoisie, and had therefore supported the establishment of private businesses and factories (with disappointing results) the Young Turks were firmly in favour of strengthening the Ottoman state. The dichotomy of the need to strengthen the state both externally and internally may, if we adopt Michael Mann's model, be put in relation to the two terms of "despotic power" and "infrastructural power."<sup>5</sup>

Despotic power, in our case, refers to the resources of the central government for organising and controlling in general; infrastructural power, on the other hands, refers to the capability of the central government to transport this power into all areas of the state, thus ensuring the superiority of centralised state power over local power. The problem of the Ottoman Empire was that both forms of power were in a crisis at least since the Ottoman bankruptcy of 1876, despite the fact that great progress had been made due to the reforms of the Tanzimat and Abdülhamid II. The European creditors extracted a large share from those state revenues the Ottoman authorities were able to collect, thus leaving few funds for the Ottoman state to increase its control over the remote areas of the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks realised that the first problem would only be solvable within a situation when the European powers were at each other's throats, in other words, when the above mentioned world order had collapsed (as was the case after the outbreak of the First World War). The second problem, internal strengthening, was a lengthier process, but had, as already mentioned, begun in the second half of the nineteenth century. Infrastructure had been improved by a huge extension of the Ottoman bureaucracy, the establishment of a telegraph network, construction of roads and railways. Yet by 1914 especially the railways, often due to political complications, had not been completed to a satisfying degree. The Baghdad Railway had several gaps, notably in the Taurus and Amanus mountain ranges and a large gap between Ra's al-'Ain and Samarra; the Hijaz railway had only been completed as far as Medina and was furthermore single-track and of limited transport capability. More problematic was foreign ownership of the existing railway networks; with the exception of the Hijaz railway, the networks were controlled by French, British and German consortiums. This situation was

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<sup>5</sup> Mann, Michael: "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," in Hall, John (ed.): *States in History*. Oxford 1989, 115.

again due to the shortage of funds. While the railways doubtlessly improved infrastructure, they nevertheless served foreign commercial interests rather than those of the Ottoman Empire. In order to foster Ottoman internal strength and development, which would in turn increase Ottoman power against external enemies, the funds had to come from Ottoman sources and in the absence of large masses of private capital in the Ottoman Empire that meant from the state. As the state, in its turn, was lingering in a position of semi-bankruptcy, and as further borrowing would only have served to aggravate the dependency on the creditor nations, the course eventually chosen by the Young Turks was to attempt the conclusion of an alliance with an economically strong power at a time of European conflict.<sup>6</sup> Yet, even in case this financial and military aid could have been used to achieve the desired goals, as far as the resources of the Ottoman state and its power in the provinces were concerned, there still remained a massive step between this reformed Ottoman Empire and an entity which could compete with a European Great Power. To meet the challenge to Ottoman independence and sovereignty on an equal footing the Ottoman government needed to forge bonds between local notables and populations and itself which transcended the realm of pragmatism. What was needed was to convince these populations and notables that they owed allegiance to the Ottoman Empire for ideological, metaphysical reasons.

Eugene Rogan has amply demonstrated how since 1867 the Ottoman state sought to expand its boundaries and eventually managed to establish government control and the rule of law at least in accessible, sedentary-agrarian parts of Transjordan. However, the acceptance of government control varied with the demands made by the state. While tax collection and land registration were efficiently enforced by 1914, conscription for the army was fiercely resisted in the Hauran and in southern Transjordan, resistance manifesting itself most noteworthy in the Karak revolt of 1910.<sup>7</sup> What Ottoman "penetration" since 1867 had thus achieved was a level of consent among the local populations which amounted to non-rebellion as long as the state did not insist on extracting more than what these very populations regarded as its due; while perhaps sufficient in peacetime, this was not enough for war, especially a total war like the First World War. The Ottoman Empire, or more precisely the central government and its local administrators and military forces had their hands full to keep outside aggressors at bay; making sure of the loyalty of its own subjects by a continual show of force was a potential drain on the military and economic resources of the Empire which it could ill afford, but had to do nevertheless in the period before and even more so during the First World War.

The predominantly pragmatic attitude of local populations could not be expected to yield the desired results. Within this model, obedience was based on

<sup>6</sup> Haley, Charles D.: "The Desperate Ottoman: Enver Pasa and the German Empire", in *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, (No.1: January 1994), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 197 – 204.

the idea that the state was too powerful to make it profitable to resist. Additionally, for some elements of the population, the presence of the state itself was actually profitable; ideally it protected peasants, their harvests and their settlements from tribal raids, provided a certain infrastructure (mostly in the field of medical aid, education and communications) and established certain standards of law. In exchange for these services the state extracted taxes. It follows necessarily that it was mostly the weaker elements of society, either in a military or an economical sense, which profited from the state; state encroachment was resented and occasionally resisted from those whose power had been paramount before (notably tribes). Rather than relying on force to keep recalcitrant segments of local populations in line, the Young Turks, as other Ottoman governments before them, turned to manufacture the Hegelian "love"-relationship of the Ottoman subjects for their state.<sup>8</sup> There appears to have been little, if any, religious-ideological component in this concept of loyalty to the Ottoman state on its fringes; as Rogan has shown Christians could be, on occasions, more loyal to the state than Muslims, if they needed state protection.<sup>9</sup> Yet even then loyalty was only given because the state offered this protection cheaper than the tribes, whom the Christian peasants had had to buy off by a payment of *khuwa* (literally "brotherhood money", in reality protection money) before. An indication how wary some minority groups were towards the Ottoman state is given in Birgit Schäbler's discussion of the Druze communities in the Syrian Hauran mountains; having been informed of the revolution of 1908, which had established *dustur* (a constitution) and *hurriyya* (freedom) the shaykhs of the Hauran replied with a letter to the local government in Damascus to the extent that they wished to be exempted from both *dustur* and *hurriyya* in order to be able to continue their traditional lifestyle. Obviously, rather than being delighted at the arrival of modern times, the Druze community was fearful of increased taxation and conscription and therefore opted for keeping its distance from the state.<sup>10</sup>

In order to establish unwavering loyalty and to free its resources the Ottoman state needed to keep its population in line. To such an end it needed a metaphysical element, or an ideology. In the initial phase of their "nation"-building the Young Turks subscribed to the principle of "Ottomanism."<sup>11</sup> The enthusiastic reaction of local populations all over the Ottoman Empire when the constitution was re-established seemed to indicate that this "constitutional Ottomanism" would eliminate tensions between peoples of different creeds and

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of Hegel's thought for modern state theory see Nettl, J.P.: "The State as Conceptual Variable", in *World Politics* XX (No.4: July 1968), 573.

<sup>9</sup> Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 182, 198, 202.

<sup>10</sup> Schäbler, *Aufstände im Drusenbergländ*, 187.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad, Feroz: *The Young Turks*. Oxford 1969, 162; Zürcher, Erik Jan: *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905 – 1926*. Leiden 1984, 22.

races. Yet the momentary enthusiasm could do little to eradicate these tensions. The Young Turks were, almost inevitably, drawn to the conclusion that the establishment of metaphysical ties between Ottoman citizens could not incorporate equally all ethnic and religious groups, which were living within the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. It was necessary to ensure the support of the majority of the Ottoman population, while those elements whose loyalty it was felt would be impossible to attract anyway were marginalised and controlled by varying levels of violence. At the outbreak of the First World War, the Young Turks chose to use Pan-Islam in their propaganda efforts, thus hoping to secure the loyalty of Turkish and Arab Muslims. As an element of pragmatism, contentious policies, such as the introduction of Turkish as the only official language in the Arab provinces were put on hold and Arabs replaced the two cabinet ministers who had tendered their resignation once the Ottoman government had pushed through the decision to go to war in October 1914. By then the Ottoman Empire had become thoroughly entangled in the German-British rivalry which had developed since the turn of the century, and which was to have such profound repercussions on the war in the Middle East.

#### Germany's Aspirations to Empire and the Emergence of her Rivalry with Britain:

Germany had made remarkable progress in the short time since 1871, when national unification had been achieved under the lead of Prussia and after defeating France. Her industrial production started to soar in the 1870s and 1880s, her steel production surpassing that of Britain by 1907. Yet she was a newcomer to the imperial game, finding the territories and markets of the world divided between France, Britain and Russia. An aggressive, expansionist colonial policy to build a German empire was, sooner or later, bound to bring conflict with its imperial rivals, and that was something Germany could, at least in the opinion of the farsighted *Reichskanzler* (imperial chancellor) Bismarck, well do without. Consequently he showed, in the early stage of his chancellorship, a strong reluctance to embark upon colonial adventures, and he managed to secure the balance within Europe with a network of treaties and pacts which aimed at the isolation of France.

German public opinion was not so moderate. Private societies sprung up pressing for the acquisition of colonies, notably the *Kolonialverein* (Colonial Society),<sup>12</sup> and later the *Flottenverein* (Naval Society), which advocated a strong battle fleet. Bismarck was a pragmatic politician, and not utterly unsympathetic to the acquisition of colonies if this could be done without upsetting the balance in Europe. Occasions to do so presented themselves in the early 1880s; from 1884 onwards, due more to private enterprise than to official

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<sup>12</sup> Craig, Gordon A.: *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1945*. Munich 1980, 11.

policy, Germany obtained several large but rather unprofitable territories mainly in sub-Saharan Africa (Cameroon, Togo, Namibia and Tanganyika) and a few Pacific islands (Samoa). A German naval base was established in Tsingtao in north-western China. The German possessions were of little economic and limited strategic value; although conflicts with other colonial powers occurred, these did not lead to war. On the other hand, Britain had become aware of the existence of another rival, who was aggressive and, as the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century were to show, dangerously unpredictable.

After the ascension of Wilhelm II in 1888, discrepancies between the Kaiser and Bismarck led to the chancellor's dismissal in 1890. Thereafter Germany's foreign policy became increasingly aggressive and expansionist, as well as incoherent and erratic.<sup>13</sup> Trumpener sums the situation up correctly by stating that "the rate of change was stupefying for Germans and alarming for others."<sup>14</sup> Having learned some lessons from the expensive and cost-ineffective colonial adventures, German interests were now mainly in trade and access to markets. But in most of the profitable markets, notably India and China, Britain held almost a monopoly and could, being in control of the sea- and land-routes to these territories, block any foreign commercial intrusion. Britain's predominant position led to considerable dismay in Germany, which sought to break this perceived stranglehold on trade.

Britain's economic policy was not an entirely protectionist one, where trade with the colonies was concerned. However, the influence of the German military, both in high political circles and in the formation of German public opinion, guaranteed that the Germans blamed Britain far more than appropriate for difficulties encountered by the German economy. In the age of nationalism this led to a dangerous accumulation of anti-British feelings in the German population, which the Kaiser, suffering at the same time from a serious lack of confidence and of diplomatic skills, did nothing to alleviate. In 1908, he gave an interview to the *Daily Telegraph* which harmed German relations with both Britain and Russia. Wilhelm took credit for having discouraged Russia from attacking Britain while it was involved in the Boer war. Furthermore the Kaiser boasted that the strategies which enabled Britain to win this war originated with him.<sup>15</sup> Although there was no shortage of attempts to bridge the widening gap, both from the German, and, more frequently, the British side, they all came to no avail. By 1914, Britain had displaced France at the top of the list of powers hostile to Germany in German public opinion.<sup>16</sup> German activities in the Middle

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<sup>13</sup> Trumpener, Ulrich: "Germany and the Ottoman Empire", in Kent, *The Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire*, 111.

<sup>14</sup> Trumpener, "Germany and the Ottoman Empire", 111.

<sup>15</sup> Craig, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 253.

<sup>16</sup> In 1915 the economist Werner Sombart remarked rather soberly about the level of hostility felt in Germany towards the Entente Powers: "We have nothing against France... only the



East both before and during the war were almost entirely directed against Britain, which was seen as the main impediment to German economic and strategic interests.<sup>17</sup> The German involvement in the Baghdad railway probably had strategic more than commercial objectives at heart. Germany, looking for a means to apply pressure on British imperial interests, could not challenge her naval supremacy and turned instead to develop a land route - the Baghdad Railway.<sup>18</sup> The importance of this project was tremendous; theoretically there was, after completion of the railway, nothing standing in Germany's way to transport troops en masse from Berlin to the Gulf coast within one week. To take the speculations further, if Germany allied herself with Persia, the soldiers could march unhindered along the coastline towards India, which they would then be free to invade at their leisure. This was, of course, more of a British horror scenario than an actual possibility; the substantial flaws shall not be discussed here in detail.<sup>19</sup> Yet what mattered was that it was persuasive enough for Britain as well as for her allies to object strongly to the continuation of the railway after it had reached Baghdad; as already mentioned, the frenzied diplomatic struggle had only been concluded by 1914 when an agreement with Britain was reached on the matter. In the long term, this was a major victory for Entente diplomacy; by 1914, the delays inflicted upon the railway construction had left large sections unfinished. This led to immense transport problems and greatly hampered the German-Ottoman war effort in Mesopotamia.

### War without Strategy - Britain, German, and Ottoman War Aims:

It is necessary to compare the war aims of the three countries which are investigated here. Among the three, the Ottoman Empire stood out by the fact that it had tangible grievances, which it sought to redress, and that its war aims were, from beginning to end, quite clearly delineated. Germany and Britain, on the other hand, entered the war in 1914 with not many more reasons for fighting than to curb the power of the enemy before it was too late; it was only in the

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French do hate us so much... but in spite of their fanatical hatred against the Germans we still regard them as brave and noble opponents... There is also no real hatred among our people against Russia. But towards Britain we do feel a spontaneous and elementary hatred." Sombart gave an interesting reason for this hatred, which seems to be borne out by Ferguson's research and Ludwig's biography of emperor William II: it was "disappointed love" (Germany's admiration for British liberalism, culture and the feeling of "common Germanity"), which Britain was felt to have ignored and betrayed. See Ungern-Sternberg, *An die Kulturwelt!*, 110.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed analysis of the German-British rivalry see Kennedy, Paul: *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914*. London 1980.

<sup>18</sup> Ireland, Paul W.: *Iraq*. London 1937, 43.

<sup>19</sup> Cohen, Stuart: "Mesopotamia in British Strategy", in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 9 (vol.2: May 1978), 176.

course of the war that more tangible war aims emerged, and even these goals were altered several times in relation to the military situation.

The very fact that there were no tangible war aims on the British or German side offered a good explanation why the war became such a protracted and seemingly senseless bloodbath, where attempts to make peace by appealing to reason were doomed to failure until one side was completely exhausted.

Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin in his work, "Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism," also believed in the inevitability of mutually eradicating conflict.<sup>20</sup> Imperialism, he reasoned, led to conflicts over territories and the control of markets; these conflicts would eventually lead to the outbreak of an all-out conflagration which would consume the bourgeois systems of the world powers.

In the 1960s Fritz Fischer argued that there was indeed a discernible reason for the outbreak of the First World War, namely German militarism and expansionism. The imperialist newcomer Germany threatened the existing world order and the balance of power. Frustrated by the observation that "the world has been given away (chancellor von Bülow)" it eventually sought to gain what it desired through direct military confrontation, which Germany lost.<sup>21</sup>

However, these analyses of the First World War, its reasons and the aims pursued by the war-faring powers (or, in Fischer's case, the aims of the "guilty" power) suffer from some confusion. They were written after the First World War; they sought, somewhat unsuccessfully, to establish continuity between the pre-war period and the war itself. In their opinion nations were driven to war by their ambitions, and fought the Great War in order to achieve them. Even classical military scholarship may, however, be quoted in order to prove the necessity of distinguishing that the politics which eventually produce war are not necessarily pursued during the conflict; war aims may have to be manufactured and imagined after the fighting has broken out, and are thus often changed due to political considerations which also have developed due to the fact that there is now armed conflict which must be given a reason and tangible objectives. Thucydides addressed this problem by pointing out that "when people are entering upon a war, they do things the wrong way around. Action comes first, and it is only when they have already suffered that they begin to think."<sup>22</sup> This phenomenon has by now been universally accepted by military writers, not uninfluenced by the recognition that the major purpose of military organisations is to prevent war rather than to fight it. Accordingly, "texts written by military councils are signals in two time zones: before and after. After a war

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis, Norman, Malone, James (eds): Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin: Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism, London: 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Fischer, Fritz: Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland, Düsseldorf 1961.

<sup>22</sup> Warner, Rex (trans.): Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War. London 1954, 81.

begins, the old doctrine is usually discarded since it applied to conditions which are ended."<sup>23</sup>

Niall Ferguson has, in his highly provocative work "The Pity of War", applied this method to the First World War for the first time. His line of argument appears credible; there were indeed a number of definite reasons, mostly fear of time working in favour of a perceivedly stronger enemy on the German side, why nations and states went to war *in 1914*. However, the war also developed its own dynamics, imposed itself on the domestic economic, social and psychological levels of the war-faring peoples and thus drove governments to formulate new aims which governments hoped would justify the outrageous casualties in the eyes of the people. Keeping up domestic morale became an essential requirement for the achievement of victory on the battlefield.

Thus any analysis of German, British and Ottoman war aims must take into account two aspects. First, the three states had different, but nevertheless discernible reasons for entering the fighting, but only formulated their ultimate goals during the war. Secondly, the war soon got out of control; instead of an "ordinary" military conflict it developed into a world war entangling all layers of society in all areas. Quite soon also the war came to be regarded as an Armageddon; peace was unimaginable without victory; defeat would result in ultimate disaster.

The governments of the combatant states of the First World War thus could not be accused of having ignored Clausewitz's basic doctrine: "One does not start a war, or one should avoid starting a war, before knowing what one wishes to gain by it and in it. The first is the aim, the second the objective."<sup>24</sup> What they could, however, be accused of was that they were unable to distinguish between aims (limited objectives) and victory (the final aim). In other words, the British as well as the German military and political leadership, and especially the propagandists in both camps, focused far more on the largely metaphysical final aim of the war than on limited and achievable objectives. It is conceivable that the war would indeed have been a short war if more attention had been paid to the objectives. The failure of the Schlieffen-plan, the inability of the Germans to win the "race to the sea" and the disappointing performance of the Austro-Hungarians should have served as a harbinger for the Central Powers of what was to come: a protracted war of attrition, which the Entente powers were, due to their economical, geopolitical and (eventually) military superiority, bound to win. It was, however, this development into a trench war on the Western Front which was largely responsible for exporting the war into the Middle East. On the eve of war the Germans perceived their position vis-à-vis the Triple Entente as inferior and wished by all means to avoid a war on two

<sup>23</sup> Bathurst, *Intelligence and the Mirror*, 61.

<sup>24</sup> Leinveber, *Mit Clausewitz*, 74.

fronts. They therefore decided to attempt the delivery of a knock-out blow to France before Britain was able to send troops to assist the French. Due to want of transport and overstretched lines of communications they were unable to pull this plan off. Victory in the West thus having been ensured, the full force of the German army could then be unleashed onto Russia. The priority of France was explained by the fact that Russia would experience more problems with her mobilisation; her territory was far larger, her army more dispersed and her strategic railway network, although much improved after the Russian defeat in 1904/5, had not yet reached completion (which was envisaged for 1917).<sup>25</sup>

The German advance through Belgium, however, went slower than planned, giving the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) time to link up with the French and enabling the two Entente powers to create a frontline stretching from the North Sea to Switzerland. For the next four years, the Western Front saw the most ferocious fighting of the war and remained on top of the agenda at least for military leaders. Political leaders, however, were prepared to exploit different ways to achieve victory than a breakthrough on the Western Front; most of these schemes were, in one way or another, connected with the Middle East.

### **Britain – The Development of an “Eastern Strategy”:**

The British entry into the war was described by foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey as honouring Britain's treaty obligations with France and Belgium. It is credible that the British (with the notable exception of Lord Kitchener) did not expect the war to last long. However, in November 1914 it was clear that the hopes for swift victory for the Entente on the Western Front were disappointed. While most of the high-ranking military commanders advocated a concentration of forces on the Western Front, the decisive theatre of the war, the politicians increasingly accepted the idea that a second front (or, for the Central Powers, a third front) should be opened in the Middle East. This policy was implemented from November 1914 onwards.

The British were divided as to the aims of this second front. While the government in London argued for dealing the Ottoman Empire a knock-out blow by forcing the Straits and occupying Constantinople, the Government of India, long concerned about the potential of Pan-Islam which the Ottomans might use against the British in India, opted for face-saving and securing the Persian Gulf as “a British lake.” The result of this thinking was the invasion of Iraq.

British war aims in the Middle East remained fairly modest until the summer of 1916. The defeat at Gallipoli in January 1916, and the surrender of a British force at Kut al-Amara in May of the same year, did not exactly give the British

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<sup>25</sup> May, Ernest E. (ed.): *Knowing One's Enemies*. Princeton 1984, 56.

much hope to win the war in the Middle East. A series of disasters on the Western Front led the British to fear they might lose the entire war.

It was at this point that the British decided to seek local allies to assist in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire, leading to the Sharifian revolt in the Hijaz. While this revolt proved a disappointment militarily as well as propagandistically, the British military situation nevertheless improved considerably from late 1916 onwards. There also was a new British prime minister, who in contrast with Asquith was bent on territorial aggrandisement in the Middle East. This strategy might be described as "closing the gap." The only obstacle in the way of establishing a British axis from Canada in the West to Australia in the East was the Ottoman Empire, positioned between the Mediterranean, Egypt and Persia (whose southern third had been under British control since 1907). From early 1917 onwards, Lloyd George's government aimed at obtaining control over this area. There was also domestic public opinion in Britain to be reckoned with; Lloyd George observed that successes in the Middle East (the conquests of Baghdad and Jerusalem) had a positive effect on public morale, far more positive than limited gains on the Western Front. Besides morale, victory in the Middle East would also, in Lloyd George's opinion, contribute to victory in Europe. The British prime minister was convinced that the only promising course of action to bring Germany to heel was "knocking out her props", i.e. first securing victory over the Ottomans, then over Bulgaria and eventually Austria-Hungary. Germany would then be completely encircled and be forced to sue for peace.<sup>26</sup> The fact that the prime minister was able to push his policy through against the resistance of the generals was clear proof that British political leadership never succumbed to the military as was the case in Germany, supporting Ferguson's study that the Entente won politically rather than militarily.<sup>27</sup>

This new role of the Middle Eastern war theatre in British strategic planning had considerable repercussions on British policy towards the contestants for succeeding the Ottomans. They promised kingship over the Arab lands to gain Hashemite leadership over an internal uprising through the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. They settled their territorial ambitions with Russia and France through the Sykes-Picot accord. And they secured a claim to Palestine through the Balfour Declaration, if at the expense of creating a Jewish national home.

### Turkey and German Strategic War Aims

German war aims in the Middle East were to break up Britain's military and economic predominance in the region, to open local markets for German goods

<sup>26</sup> Jackson, General Sir William, Lord Bramall, Field Marshal: *The Chiefs. The Story of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff*. London 1992, 88.

<sup>27</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 317.

and to secure control of these newly established trade routes with a network of naval bases and control over the Ottoman railways. Colonial expansionism was, however, not an uncontested policy of the successive German governments from the 1880's onwards. Industrial and agrarian tycoons were more in favour of domestic economic expansion; on the other hand, land for settlers, driven out of Germany by a system with limited social mobility, was an issue. The paramount position of Central Europe in the German strategic and economic planning was never contested; but outside Europe, Germany wanted to become Britain's equal and to see the German flag wave over the seas of the world.<sup>28</sup> Yet by 1914 Germany had to recognise that it had lost the naval race, and also that the Triple Alliance was economically and militarily inferior to the Triple Entente.<sup>29</sup> Under these circumstances a quick victory in the European theatre, to which the German high command still adhered, was doubtful; but this imbalance might be redressed by attacking the Entente powers via their colonies, especially via their Muslim colonial populations.

This meant that Germany would have to find ways and means to create rebellions and armed uprisings in the Muslim Entente colonies. The Germans believed that a jihad proclaimed by the Ottoman sultan would bring the desired results, yet first they had to secure the support of the Ottoman Empire for such a scheme. The Ottoman capacity to render military assistance to Germany was limited; Turkey could, however, block the Dardanelles, in order to obstruct the establishment of direct communications between Russia and her allies. Ottoman forces could also attack Egypt and the Suez Canal from Palestine in an attempt to cut or to seriously impede Britain's communications with India. Last, the Ottoman army could apply pressure on Russia by attacking it in the Caucasus.

The more efficient the Turkish warfare at these fronts, the more allied troops they would be able to divert, weakening the Western front, the decisive war theatre: every allied soldier necessary to control allied imperial possessions would be called away from the trenches in France and Belgium. This applied even more after deadlock was reached on the Western Front in late autumn 1914. Germany hoped to overcome the allied armies in Europe by diverting their forces to defend colonial possessions and thus to decide the war in its favour.

The German leadership believed it yet more advantageous to provoke rebellions within enemy colonies than to open a second front there with German forces. To defend India against outside attacks, for instance, although a tremendous task, was by and large possible. But to defend Britain in India against the Indians, should they rise in masses and unify under a central leadership, was next to impossible. The trouble the Algerians had caused their French colonisers until their country was finally conquered at enormous cost of

<sup>28</sup> Chubin, Shahram (ed.): *Germany and the Middle East. Patterns and Prospects*. London 1992, 26.

<sup>29</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 85.

manpower and finance in 1902 was probably at the forefront of the German leadership's thinking. Similarly, the Sanusiya was still inflicting heavy losses on the Italians three years after they had first invaded Libya in 1911.<sup>30</sup> The lesson to be learned from these phenomena was quite simple: given an aim and proper leadership, people with inferior weapons could develop into a remarkable fighting force, due their superior knowledge of the country and the sympathy they enjoyed with the local population. These advantages made local insurgents more than a match for a European army burdened with the task of policing the country and forced to operate among a hostile population. If it had taken the French over seventy years to put down resistance in relatively thinly populated Algeria, what would be the cost for the British in case of a major revolt in India or Egypt? In both countries there was no shortage of people discontented with imperial rule. The only remaining problem seemed to be finding the ideology that would unite and lead them against the oppressors of their countries.

### The Jihad Strategy

The Germans found a solution for this problem in the significant percentage of Muslims among the colonial populations of Britain, France and Russia. In terms of numbers, Britain was the world's foremost 'Muslim Power', followed by the Netherlands, Russia and France.<sup>31</sup> If Germany could persuade a high Muslim authority to proclaim a jihad, or Holy War, against the colonisers the Entente powers would be confronted with rebellions in their colonies of a scale apt to terminate their colonial reign. Germany's propaganda effort subsequently aimed to encourage this jihad to erupt in the aforementioned regions.

In almost all resistance movements against French or British colonisation in the Middle East, Islam had played an important role for rallying the local population against the infidels. In Islamic law, infidel aggression against or even occupation of parts of *Dar al-Islam*, as the territory of Islam is known, justifies and necessitates jihad against the aggressors.<sup>32</sup> In German opinion, if the 'jihad'-stratagem had worked in Algeria or Libya, why should it not work in Egypt and India? No imperial army could reasonably hope to subdue India's 60 million Muslims, who might possibly be joined by their Hindu compatriots for the sake of the freedom of their country.

<sup>30</sup> Anderson, Lisa: "Nationalist Sentiment in Libya, 1908 - 1922", in Khalidi, Origins of Arab Nationalism, 232/233.

<sup>31</sup> In the absence of a census exact numbers are difficult to ascertain. The Muslim population of India alone exceeded 60 million (Imperial Gazetteer of India, Oxford 1907, 453). Holland possessed Indonesia, France Northern and Central Africa, and Russia Central Asia as colonies or protectorates where Muslims made up the predominant percentage of the population.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Tunisi, Shaykh Salih al-Sharif: *La Vérité au sujet de la Guerre Sainte*. Berne 1916, 3; See also Peters, Rudolph: *Islam and Colonialism*. The Hague 1979; Martin, B.J.: *Muslim Brotherhoods in 19th Century Africa*. Cambridge 1976.

*Islampolitik* (Islam politics) became one of the guiding lines in the German politics dealing with the Eastern question, increasingly taking the form of *Drang nach Osten* (Thrust to the East).<sup>33</sup> Like the Germans, other European powers had observed the role Islam could play in organising resistance to colonial encroachment; allied with the Ottoman Empire and the sultan-caliph, the Germans now hoped to use Islam against their enemies.

### The Role of Islam in Organising Resistance to Imperial Expansion

As the works of Jacob Landau and Albert Hourani show, Muslim intellectuals all over the world were certainly aware of the concept of Pan-Islam by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> Primary examples of these Pan-Islamists were Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida. Yet what influenced von Oppenheim and other Germans as well as British or French statesmen was not the works of intellectuals. What triggered their expectations or fears of Pan-Islam were mishaps in British colonial expansion in Afghanistan or India and especially events in nineteenth-century Africa, where the Europeans had observed, or perceived to observe, "Islam" as an organising ideology at work.

In many of these cases the Europeans also had been able to observe that the use of "Islam" as a propaganda tool to rally resistance against the invaders was not necessarily restricted to governments or a given political or religious establishment. Quite frequently the propaganda weapon was used by popular movements, such as the Sufi brotherhoods in Africa, which had come to the fore in the nineteenth century. Rather than orthodox Islam as embodied by Al-Azhar or Muslim scholars these brotherhoods demonstrated the power of Islam as a weapon against the colonial powers. As B.G. Martin has pointed out, the nineteenth century saw an almost explosive rise in the number of Sufi brotherhoods spreading throughout the Muslim world. As opposed to earlier centuries these new brotherhoods did not regard themselves as affiliated with the "mother-organisation" of Sufi brotherhoods, the Qadiriyya (founded by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Kaylani, d.1166), but subscribed to the notion of being "Muhammadiyya"-brotherhoods. Their members did not aspire to union with God, but with the prophet Muhammad. Far from being only a change of religious doctrine this had important repercussions on the role of the brotherhoods in African society.

There are three main factors which might have impressed the usefulness of Pan-Islamic propaganda on Max von Oppenheim. First, the new Sufi brotherhoods followed the example of a historical figure and regarded hijra and jihad as essential elements of their mission.<sup>35</sup> Second, with the exception of

<sup>33</sup> Lewin, Evans: *The German Road to the East. An account of the "Drang nach Osten" and of Teutonic Aims in the Near and Middle East.* London 1916, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Landau, Jacob: *The Politics of Pan-Islam. Ideology and Organisation.* London 1990.

<sup>35</sup> Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, 10.



'Usuman dan Fodio's jihad against a neighbouring semi-Islamic, semi-pagan kingdom in northern Nigeria, these jihads brought the Sufi brotherhoods into direct, often armed, conflict with the expanding colonial powers. The brotherhoods also sometimes were essential to rally resistance against the imperial powers, as in the case of amir 'Abd al-Qadir in Algeria.<sup>36</sup>

Third, at least since the 1880s the Ottoman Empire, notably Sultan Abdülhamid II, had discarded the previous policy of disregarding Muslim movements outside the Ottoman Empire. The reason for this rediscovery of Pan-Islam was probably that both Abdülhamid II and the reformist Sufi brotherhoods had become attracted to the idea of the caliphate. Also Abdülhamid II played the Islam card to put *some* pressure on European colonial powers, especially Britain and France, and frequently invited the heads of Sufi brotherhoods to Istanbul and bestowed great honours on them. He was rewarded by high praise and missionary activities in areas where the Ottoman Empire had otherwise little opportunity to become involved.<sup>37</sup>

The resistance led by the Sufi brotherhoods against European colonial expansion in Africa was well known in European diplomatic circles. Oppenheim himself, during his travels in Africa and his stay in Egypt probably had many occasions to observe the role of Islam as an organising ideology for native resistance. In Egypt he was a regular guest of two of the most influential Egyptian Sufi shaykhs,<sup>38</sup> in Libya he had contacts with members of the Sanusiya order and even might have met Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif personally. Moreover, during the period 1896 - 1910, when Oppenheim was attached to the German consulate in Cairo, the baron was able to witness at least two ongoing campaigns against European imperialism in different parts of Africa. Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdullah Hasan in Somalia led his "dervishes" against the Italians and the British in Somalia, and in 1896 the Mahdiyya in Sudan still held the Anglo-Egyptians at bay; Oppenheim was in Cairo when it was finally defeated in 1898/9.

These movements must have had considerable influence for the baron to devise his scheme of Pan-Islamic incendiary propaganda, which he proposed to the German authorities in 1914. The Mahdiyya was a particularly interesting example, as it offered insight into how rebellions could be instigated in Entente colonies. The Mahdiyya was the most successful native resistance movement against foreign domination during the nineteenth century, though what had

<sup>36</sup> Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, 13-33; 34-67; See also Clancy-Smith, *Julia: Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest and Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800 - 1904)*. Berkeley, Los Angeles 1994.

<sup>37</sup> Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Oppenheim Private Archive (henceforth OPA), Max Freiherr von Oppenheim. *Autobiography*, Unpublished Typoscript, (Landshut 1946). *Mein Verkehr mit wichtigen Eingeborenen*, 49.

worked in Sudan would not necessarily work in other areas. Optimistic as ever, Oppenheim decided to disregard these weaknesses of his scheme.

The Mahdiyya rebellion in Sudan offered some insights into what might happen if all factors were favourable for an insurgency. The Sudan was a vast territory, with extremely stretched lines of communications, and the rapaciousness and inefficiency of the Egyptian administration after the 1820s had quickly alienated all segments of the Sudanese population. Although most Sudanese had an axe to grind against the Egyptians, the staggering success of the "Mahdi" had to have other reasons as well. What is of importance is that Muhammad Ahmad, a penniless nobody, son of a boat-builder, should be able to convince not only ordinary Sudanese Muslims, but also a council of religious scholars, of his Mahdship; that he was able to proclaim a jihad and make it happen; and that he so profoundly impressed respect for his Mahdship that even after his early death in 1885 his successor, the khalifa 'Abdallahi, was able to hold on to power until defeated by Lord Kitchener in 1898/9.<sup>39</sup>

The successes of the Mahdiyya notwithstanding, it showed nevertheless weaknesses when encountering determined resistance. The Mahdiyya had been able to preserve Sudanese independence largely due to rivalries between Britain and France, and the fact that Britain was from 1882 preoccupied with establishing its administration in Egypt and consequently had her hands full. Once Britain was able to move without constraints, superior armament and organisation made short work of the dervish armies.

Muslim anti-colonial movements were also confronted with the problem that it was often easier to oppose an invader than to remain leaders of local populations. The extraction of material and men for military campaigns and economic devastation often brought about by armed resistance to western armies superior in equipment and organisation made continuation of the struggle against foreign intrusion unpopular after a certain amount of time had elapsed.

Yet most damaging of all was the highly divided attitude among Muslims towards the Western powers. Although, strictly speaking, hardly a single Muslim religious scholar ever positively endorsed foreign rule over what had previously been *Dar al-Islam* (Territories under Islamic Rule), many developed pragmatic attitudes to the West. Armed resistance occurred where there were real grievances inflicted on the local population by the colonisers. If colonial rule should, after a certain time, turn out to be benevolent and fair, it was quite unlikely that people should resort to violence. Not all Muslim intellectuals or movements were hostile to the Western invaders; some regarded their presence as vital for modernisation (Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in India is a good example of this category), and others regarded the Europeans as useful allies against

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<sup>39</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Mahdiyya, see: Holt, P.M.: *The Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881 - 1898. A Study of its Origins, Development and Overthrow*. 2nd ed., Oxford 1970.

local competitors for spiritual or real power. The topic of Jamil Abun-Nasr's work on the Tijaniyya is such a Sufi brotherhood, which collaborated with the French against Amir 'Abd al-Qadir, whom the Tijaniyya leadership regarded as far more dangerous than the invaders.<sup>40</sup>

What condemned most Muslim-led revolts against European colonisation to fail was that they usually were intensely localised affairs. In other words, it was not "Islam" or "the Muslims" who fought but Algerians, Libyans, inhabitants of the Caucasus or Indonesia who resisted European encroachment. Islamic sentiments and language were used by the more successful resistance leaders to manufacture, in the words of Rudolf Peters, "a unifying ideology that would motivate Muslims to join hands in an anti-colonialist struggle."<sup>41</sup> Pan-Islam lacked a form of political mass organisation which would have been able to turn it into a "world-power."<sup>42</sup>

This lack of mass organisation and the overall failure to resist European colonial expansionism do not mean, however, that the role of Islamic movements for the organisation of resistance may safely be belittled. It is true that anti-colonial resistance movements were sometimes easily crushed, but there are at least two examples when they managed to keep up the struggle for a considerable period of time: the Sanusiya resistance to the Italians (1911 - 1931) and Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan (the "Mad Mullah"), whose campaign against the Italians and the British in Somalia (1899 - 1920) lasted two decades. Both inflicted serious losses on the colonial powers and gave rise to considerable anxiety. Peters' argument that the very existence of these armed movements in the more remote European colonial possessions might have brought the colonial powers to expand colonial rule further than they might have intended - often the lands controlled by the resistance movements were of little economic or strategic value - shows that these movements were feared and seen as a serious threat to European control over the territories in question.<sup>43</sup>

For the topic discussed in this study it is interesting to note that the Germans encountered armed Muslim resistance during their colonial expansion, too. Although the official line pursued in German Pan-Islamic propaganda during the First World War was that Germany, in contrast to other European powers, had never occupied Islamic territory, it was in fact as recently as 1908 that the German colonial administration in Dar al-Salaam (Tanganyika) had been informed about an "important Muslim movement" from its representative in the town of Lindi. The district officer reported that "a letter from Mecca" was circulated among the Muslim population, that "fanatical preaching" against

<sup>40</sup> Abun-Nasr, Jamil M.: *The Tijaniyya. A Sufi Order in the Modern World*. London 1965.

<sup>41</sup> Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, 153.

<sup>42</sup> Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, 153.

foreigners had occurred, and that "aggressive plans" were forged against "Europeans" and "Christian missions."<sup>44</sup>

Although most copies of the letter were quickly seized by the authorities, and no further action had to be taken after some individuals had been arrested, the incident clearly gave the Germans a fright. On the other hand, the potential usefulness of Pan-Islamic propaganda seemed amply demonstrated. It is likely that Max von Oppenheim was aware of the affair, and that this might have contributed to form his ideas of Pan-Islamic propaganda, which the First World War was to give him an occasion to realise.

### **Prelude to the "Jihad made in Germany": The War in Tripolitania, 1911 - 1912**

Although, as already pointed out above, there was no shortage of "jihad" in the course of the nineteenth century, it was probably the events following the Italian invasion of Tripolitania at the end of September 1911 that served as primary example how useful Pan-Islamic propaganda could be.

The Tripolitanian war probably opened many an eye in European cabinets and military circles. Here was what had long been expected: a jihad, led by the Ottomans and joined by the local Arab population, able to defeat or at least to keep at bay the armies of a European great power.

Enver Paşa certainly gained some useful experience during his time in Tripolitania. As already mentioned he became convinced that what brought the Arabs to join his forces was not his personal fame, but his position as son-in-law of the caliph. Second, Enver realised that Italy's invasion of Libya was only possible with the connivance or at least acquiescence of the other great powers. Italy could not have expected to have its way if France, Britain or Austria had raised objections. That they did not do so seemed to prove that the time of the Ottoman Empire being able to rely on at least the support of one European power was over. Enver observed on August 16, 1912 that "the only thing that might save us from utter catastrophe would be a war on the continent"; in that case he was sure that it would be possible to conclude an alliance and to obtain the necessary means of strengthening Turkey's defenses and war potential.<sup>45</sup>

With very little effort at propaganda Pan-Islam nevertheless seemed to work. The few hundred Ottoman regulars were augmented by an ever-increasing flow of tribesmen and eventually by the Sanusiya itself. This in turn put a vast network of communications stretching all over northern and even central Africa at the disposal of the Ottomans; volunteers, as the British author G.F. Abbott discovered, came not only from Libya, but also from Tunisia (particularly skilled medical and technical personnel), Morocco and the southern Sahara (Touareg).<sup>46</sup> The tribal volunteers, moreover, if well-trained

<sup>44</sup> Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, 158.

<sup>45</sup> Enver Paşa, *Um Tripolis*, 68.

<sup>46</sup> Abbott, G.F.: *The Holy War in Tripoli*. London 1912, 166.

and well-led by Ottoman officers who "understood the Arabs," were proving more than a match for the Italians, whose numbers as well as equipment were far superior.<sup>47</sup>

Another important factor was the German connection. There were, as corroborated both by Enver Paşa and Abbott, several German officers fighting with the Ottoman forces; Enver Paşa put the German lieutenant von Bentheim as commander of the machine-gun corps at Derna.<sup>48</sup> Other foreigners in the Ottoman camp included an Austrian-Hungarian (Baron Binder-Kriegelstein) and an Englishman who had converted to Islam before joining the Ottoman army.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, the Italian invasion had put Germany into a difficult position with the Ottomans. German ambassador Marschall von Bieberstein had frequently reassured the Ottoman government that Italy, an ally of Germany, did not plan any aggressive action, as a result of which the Ottoman authorities had chosen not to reinforce the Tripoli garrison before the Italian attack. The presence of German officers in the Ottoman forces in Libya, although probably causing the German Foreign Office no little embarrassment, was one way to redress the lack of German diplomatic support. The dispatch of a Red Cross mission financed by the firms Krupp, Mauser, the Deutsche Bank and other German firms, which had interests in the Ottoman Empire lent additional proof to the fact that the Germans wished to reestablish their standing with the Ottomans.<sup>50</sup>

All these Europeans, whether fighting actively with the Ottoman forces as officers or as journalists and war correspondents used the phrase "Holy War"; resistance was, in their eyes, purely motivated by religious feeling. Abbott relates how he met the Qadiri Shaykh Sidi Muhammad al-Kiyani, who predicted a full-scale *jihad* once the European powers were at each other's throats and consequently thrown off their guard; yet other Tripolitanian Arab leaders were by no means satisfied with the notion that the war only had a religious dimension. Farhat Bey al-Zawi, the most important Arab leader and propagandist besides Sulayman al-Baruni, told a visiting French journalist:

"Holy War! Do not write this word...You will make us suspect in France. We are patriots in bare feet and rags, like your soldiers of the revolution, and not religious fanatics...If the Turkish government abandons us we will proclaim that it has forfeited its

<sup>47</sup> Abbot, *Holy War*, 207. The Tripolitanian War was the first war in which air power was used by an army in the field; the Italians used spotter planes and dirigibles both to aid their artillery and for bombing missions.

<sup>48</sup> Enver Paşa, *Um Tripoli*, 59.

<sup>49</sup> See Abbott, *Holy War*, VIII; Enver Paşa, *Um Tripoli*, 44.

<sup>50</sup> Abbott, *Holy War*, 247.

rights over our country. We will form the republic of Tripolitania."<sup>51</sup>

For proto-nationalists, such as Farhat Bey, too strong a stress on the religious nature of the war in Tripoli obviously was contrary to his views about modernity and development; from his statement it becomes clear that the Tripolitanian leader wished for development of his country through friendly cooperation with Europe, and not by establishing a "fanatic" Islamic state. This line of action, as we shall see, was also chosen by most nationalists of other countries with whom the Germans and the Ottomans came to work during the First World War.

### **The German-Ottoman alliance and the Ottoman Entry into the War**

The Young Turks were as keen to revive the Empire as any previous Ottoman government had been; the recovery of lost territories, or even the addition of new ones, was on top of the foreign policy agenda. The security obtained from such consolidation against attacks from outside would give the empire the breathing space needed to carry out domestic reforms, which would enable it to join the circle of great powers as an equal. But the way to achieve this was a major bone of contention in the Turkish leadership, especially after the outbreak of WWI. Obviously there were three options at hand - alliance with one or the other camp and consequently entry into the war, or neutrality. The Ottoman government acted entirely pragmatically in the solution of this problem. Personal inclinations of the leading politicians to one or the other camp seem to have played only a marginal role.

After three wars that had ended in defeat and a ruinous economic situation, neutrality seemed preferable. Turkey was deeply in need of the rest which an intra-European war might afford it. Domestic reforms could be carried out, the army and navy reformed and strengthened, so that the empire would be in a better and more powerful condition, when the showdown with Russia or another power that coveted its territory might take place. Minister of finance Cavit Bey led the camp of the neutralists, together with minister of agriculture Sulayman Effendi al-Bustani and minister of post Oskan Bey. They continued to advocate strict neutrality even on the eve of the Turkish entry into the war in November 1914 and consequently resigned when their position was overruled by the pro-war party in the CUP.<sup>52</sup>

The fundamental flaw in their argumentation lay in the fact that the resources of the empire for reforms were too limited; outside assistance was simply essential. Turkey possessed no manufacturing industry capable of

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *Nationalist Sentiment in Libya*, 230.

<sup>52</sup> Cemal Paşa, Ahmet: *Erinnerungen eines türkischen Staatsmannes*. Munich: 1922, 142.

building the necessary weapons and machinery, nor the finances to buy them.<sup>53</sup> Also, at least in wartime, the European powers would need their material for their own war effort and consequently would be reluctant to sell to Turkey. An alliance with a powerful industrial nation was the only way out of the problem, and with all industrial nations except the USA being combatants, this meant the inevitable entry into the war.

The more far-sighted members of the Ottoman government clearly realised this and in May 1914 Talaat approached Russia while in July Cemal Paşa was sent to France to negotiate an alliance. Both came to no avail; the offers were politely but firmly turned down. Britain had also signalled that it was not interested in an alliance with the Ottoman Empire. The uninterested or even hostile stance of the Entente powers forced the Ottoman Empire to turn to Germany.<sup>54</sup>

The alliance marked a departure from previous Ottoman policy. Generally Turkey, being a weak and threatened state, had been interested in balancing the influence of one great power against that of another, in an attempt to profit from the rivalries between them, and also so as not to be seen as an ally of one side and risk attracting the hostility of their opponents. The German military mission of 1913 was entrusted with reforming the Ottoman army, but the naval mission, almost equal in size, was a British one led by Rear Admiral Sir Arthur H. Limpus, and the gendarmerie was to be modernised by a French military mission under General Bauman.

Germany had by that time a long record of activities within the empire. It had been mostly involved in the field of economy, yet was by no means the most important trading partner of the empire; it was the fourth-largest market for Turkish exports (after Britain, France and Austria-Hungary) and third in Ottoman imports (after Britain and Austria-Hungary).<sup>55</sup>

In attempting to forge an alliance with Germany the CUP followed the tendency of Abdülhamid II, during whose reign German economic and military involvement in the empire had soared.<sup>56</sup> After the revolution of 1908, Germany initially fell from favour for being associated with the ancien régime, and the CUP first turned to the more liberal powers Britain and France for support. By 1910 German-Turkish relations were again as cordial as before the constitutional revolution.

Military relations between the two countries had been intensive since the days of Frederick the Great. Hellmuth von Moltke, later Commander-in-Chief of the Prussian army in the Franco-Prussian war, had spent some years in

<sup>53</sup> Kent, *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, 16. The imperial treasury in 1914 was almost exhausted, ready cash being estimated at 92 000 TL (less than two million German marks).

<sup>54</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914 – 1918*. Princeton 1968, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 10.

<sup>56</sup> Kent, *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, 11.

Turkey in the late 1830s, and since then German officers and military engineers had served regularly in the Ottoman army, often in high positions. German-Ottoman cooperation had increased in the days of Abdülhamid II, when Emperor Wilhelm II had travelled to the empire twice. The Kaiser's visit to Abdülhamid II, whose repressive policies against opposition and minorities in the empire were the object of European criticism, had caused outrage in most of the non-German European press, but the Kaiser was not to be stopped in his pursuit of *Islampolitik*. In a major speech held at the grave of Saladin in Damascus he had boasted: "May the three hundred million Muslims of the world rest assured that the German emperor will forever be their friend and protector."<sup>57</sup>

Although by no means the dominant Great Power in the Ottoman Empire by 1914 Germany's qualifications for becoming an ally of the Ottomans were none too bad. In contrast to the 'classic' imperial powers, Germany had no territorial interests in Turkey, at least not for the time being.<sup>58</sup> It had not taken part in the deliberate crippling of the Turkish economy to such an extent as had Britain and France. German investments and assistance in improving Ottoman infrastructure, notably the construction of the Baghdad railway, which had already become a substantial source of revenue for the Ottoman state treasury by 1914, frequent professions of friendship for Islam and the Ottoman empire, and the remarkably successful work done by German officers in training the Ottoman army had earned Germany a substantially better reputation than any other European power.<sup>59</sup> Ottoman feelings for the Germans were not those of love or Germanophilia; Germany was less dangerous than Russia, Britain or France, and German and Ottoman interests were sufficiently similar during the early period of the war to make an alliance possible.

Germany had a far-spread and efficient network of diplomatic representatives in the Empire, with an embassy and consular office in Istanbul, and consuls in most provincial capitals or larger cities throughout the empire.<sup>60</sup> Paul Weitz, representative of the 'Frankfurter Zeitung' in Istanbul from 1895 to 1918 was renowned as an expert intelligence gatherer and a valuable contact with the Ottoman government.

It may safely be assumed that few Turks considered German assistance to be given out of entirely altruistic motives; yet the Germans usually seemed to

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<sup>57</sup> Kent, *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, 112.

<sup>58</sup> I refer to official policies. The ultra-nationalist pan-German league had dreamt of settling German farmers in Anatolia and Mesopotamia in 1891, but had not got any substantial backing from high-ranking politicians. By 1914, colonizing plans seem to have been dropped in favour of intensified economical involvement. See Kent, *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, 120.

<sup>59</sup> Mühlmann, Carl: *Die deutschen Bahnunternehmungen in der asiatischen Türkei 1888-1914*. PhD. Thesis Berlin 1926, 132.

<sup>60</sup> Mühlmann, *Die deutschen Bahnunternehmungen*, 113.



know what they were doing, as their quick rise to a first-rank world power suggested. Sober analysis showed that Germany was the only power seriously interested in a strong Turkey, both in terms of long-term policies and military thinking.<sup>61</sup> The German military leadership pressed urgently for the empire's active entry into the war once an alliance had been concluded, on account of its great strategic potential.<sup>62</sup>

A more metaphysical argument in Germany's favour was expressed in Celal Nuri's *Ittihad-i Islam ve Almanya* (The Unity of Islam and Germany) published in 1914.<sup>63</sup> Nuri refers to Ibn Khaldun's theory of peoples, which draws an analogy to the life cycle of human beings. Like an individual a people as a whole is subjugated to the eternal circle of youth, maturity, old age and death (or decline and disintegration). Great nations rise and fall and are eventually overrun and conquered by new powers. The idea of the old imperialists Britain and France overrun by the newcomer Germany certainly appealed to the Ottoman elite. Turkey, in this framework, could only gain from an alliance with Germany. Liberated from external assailants, it could concentrate on modernising its economy. Not only could the empire hope to regain lost territories, but it would also be a huge and grateful market for German goods and especially technical expertise. The transformation from a backward, weak and largely agricultural state to a modern, powerful industrial nation was in the long run the fruit to be reaped from the German-Turkish alliance, Nuri concluded.

Another important factor that tilted the scales in Germany's favour was that Germany would be far less dangerous for the Ottoman Empire if victorious in the war than the Entente powers. In the case of an Entente victory, Turkey's fate seemed to be sealed, partition and colonisation to be the inevitable outcome. A victorious Germany and Austria-Hungary, on the other hand, would be free to satisfy their territorial aspirations in British, French and Russian imperial dominions. The Ottoman Empire, having embarked upon the train to victory at the right time, would certainly receive a considerable share of the spoils. Egypt and Northern Africa, and the territories of Turkestan and Central Asia (which appealed to the pan-Turanists among the Young Turks), could be gained as prizes from the war effort. Turkey would emerge strengthened and enlarged, its morale and prestige boosted.

Enver offered an Ottoman alliance to the German ambassador Hans von Wangenheim on July 22, 1914. The ambassador at first turned the offer down, but was overruled by Kaiser Wilhelm on July 24 "for reasons of expediency." The German military leadership instructed Wangenheim to sign a treaty only on condition that Turkey could take quick and decisive action against Russia. The ambassador, previously sceptical about Turkey's value as an ally, decided,

<sup>61</sup> Cemal Pascha, *Erinnerungen*, 120.

<sup>62</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 36.

<sup>63</sup> Nuri, *Celal: Ittihad-i Islam ve Almanya*. Istanbul 1914, 11.

without any obvious reason that this condition had been met and thus the alliance was concluded on August 2, 1914 - in other words, at a time when Germany already was at war.<sup>64</sup>

In legal terms, the Ottoman Empire had entered the war just by signing. However, the problems and slow pace of Ottoman mobilisation were reason enough for the Ottoman government to declare its "supportive neutrality". While for many high-ranking CUP officials this would have been the ideal solution, Germany continually pressed for Turkey's entry into the war, which came in November 1914.

Two reasons may be suggested for Enver to have succeeded where Talaat and Cemal had failed. On the one hand, as Ferguson has credibly pointed out, the Germans were by no means confident and optimistic at the outbreak of war, believing Germany to be economically and militarily inferior to the Triple Entente.<sup>65</sup> Germany's industrial, economic and military potential was probably sufficient to defeat every member of the Triple Entente on its own; in combination they were far superior to the Triple Alliance. Austria was only "the second-weakest of the Great Powers" and Italy's contractual commitment to the Triple Alliance only obliged her to observe benevolent neutrality in case of its allies becoming entangled in war. In the course of time, the Germans thought, this imbalance of power would increase, and not decrease; therefore a quick war delivering a knock-out blow to France and a subsequent one to Russia was seen as the only means to ensure "survival."

Ferguson has pointed out correctly that every European statesman took a gamble in summer 1914, and the Ottomans did not want to be left out of the game. For the Ottomans, the stakes were high; yet they showed themselves a good deal more apt in the game than the Germans. In retrospect, the three offers of alliance (to Russia, France and Germany) all suggest that the Ottoman Empire sought, first and foremost, protection against Russia. Talaat's overture to the Russian government was the direct approach; given the rediscovery of Pan-Slavism and the long-standing Russian dream of conquering Istanbul, the "Rome of Orthodox Christianity," it was highly unlikely that Talaat expected the offer to be accepted. Cemal Paşa's mission to France was the indirect approach. France was Russia's ally since the late 1880s; it was Russia's main creditor and therefore could be expected to have some control over Russia's actions. France also was a desirable ally out of economic considerations for the Ottoman Empire, as it was the Empire's largest creditor. Yet the French were well aware that alliance with the Ottoman Empire could only lead to trouble with Russia, whose goodwill (and consequently military support) they felt was essential for coping with Germany.

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<sup>64</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 15ff.

<sup>65</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 52.

By default the Central Powers, notably Germany, was the most likely among the great powers to be sympathetic to an offer of alliance; Enver not only chose the correct option, but he also got the timing right. It should not be overlooked that the real outbreak of war in 1914 came almost out of the blue; although the existing international tension might have made war likely *sometime*, there had not been any indication during 1914 that war was imminent. The governments of the European powers had been complacent and therefore rejected the Ottoman Empire's offer of alliance out of hand. By the end of July 1914, when Enver's offer was made to ambassador Wangenheim, the situation had changed dramatically. It has already been pointed out that the German political and military leadership felt doubtful about Germany's chances to win the war. She was threatened by France from the west and by Russia from the east, and it was doubtful if Britain would remain neutral or come to the defence of France.

The aforesaid lists the probable reasons why the Germans accepted the Ottoman offer so quickly (from Enver's offer to the conclusion of the alliance only 10 days elapsed). Regardless of how inferior the Ottoman armed forces might have been in comparison to their probable opponents (as matters were to show they were not, at least in the early stages of the war), they still could cause considerable anxiety in the enemy camp by attacking colonial possessions (Egypt in the case of Britain and the Caucasus region in the case of Russia). But the trump card, the real "secret weapon," was the Ottoman Empire's Islamic credential and the Ottoman sultan's position as caliph of all Sunni Muslims. The Germans believed that Pan-Islamic revolt, which the proclamation of jihad by the caliph could be expected to bring about, would cause absolute mayhem in the colonies of Britain, France and Russia, most of which were either entirely Muslim-populated (northern Africa, Central Asia) or had sizeable Muslim minorities (India).

Thus the Germans were actually quite interested in having an alliance with Turkey, even before the general "race for allies" (focussing on countries like Bulgaria, Rumania, and Greece) began in earnest in 1915. Sensing German anxieties Enver bargained remarkably well. Instead of giving the Germans the idea that they had nobody else to go to, Enver put his offer in blunt terms, stressing that the empire had to make an alliance and if Germany refused to sign he would "with a heavy heart" be forced to turn to the Entente.<sup>66</sup>

Enver's thinly veiled blackmail paid. On the other hand, the rather sudden outbreak of the war had led to a quick change of policy for the German leadership, overruling those who warned that Turkey would not be a strong and reliable ally. Wangenheim and Liman were convinced that the Ottoman army was still inferior compared to those of its foes, yet they were overruled by the

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<sup>66</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 20.

Kaiser and those who regarded Germany's position as too serious to reject any offer of alliance.<sup>67</sup>

## From Alliance to War

The German-Turkish alliance, if not the outcome of coherent German policies, had been established by 1914. We have seen that the Ottoman leadership was mainly interested in gaining support against the fear of Entente aggression and consequently procrastinated for as long as possible before entering the war. Germany's military leaders, especially the chief of the German general staff von Moltke, were more than dismayed at the Ottomans' failure to honour what they perceived to be their alliance obligations, but they had no means at their disposal to force the Turks into war. This was to change by mid-August 1914.

Two German battle cruisers, "Göben" and "Breslau" of the German Mediterranean Squadron, sought refuge from the pursuing Royal Navy in the Turkish Straits. Contrary to neutrality laws, the ships were, after some feverish diplomatic activity, allowed to enter and remain. The outcry in the Entente countries about this obvious break of international law was countered with the announcement that the ships had been bought from the German government for eighty million marks and subsequently been commissioned for the Ottoman navy under the names "Yavuz Sultan Selim" and "Midilli." The story of the two ships has frequently been told in other publications and need not be retold here. Only two points are of special interest for our topic:

First, the arrival of the two cruisers marked a significant strengthening of German control over Ottoman naval policy. "Yavuz" and "Midilli" were the only two modern units of the Ottoman navy, over which German Admiral Wilhelm Souchon was officially given command. The German crews had entered Ottoman service and donned fezzes; but the loyalties of commander and crews were of course to Germany.

Second, the transfer of the ships to Ottoman ownership also improved German reputation in Ottoman public opinion.<sup>68</sup> In 1911, the Ottoman government had ordered two battleships from Britain, the "Sultan Osman I" and "Reshadieh." The ships were to a large extent to be paid with donations from the Ottoman public. The whole affair had already been exploited propagandistically; photos in the Military Museum, Istanbul show a block of wood erected on Taksim square; whoever donated more than 5 kurus, obtained the right of hammering a nail into it. The funds had been paid to the Armstrong-Vickers shipyard where the cruisers were constructed. But in August 1914 the British government, in anticipation of Turkey's alliance with the Central Powers, had confiscated the ships and commissioned them to the Royal Navy.

<sup>67</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 46.

<sup>68</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 31.

Although a fully understandable move from a military point of view, the reputation of Britain in Turkey was greatly damaged. Germany, seen to step in to fill the gap with her ships, could exploit this to the fullest, even in the population, which was described as exultant when the two cruisers entered the harbour of Istanbul.<sup>69</sup>

Still the Turks were reluctant to enter the war; when the slow pace of mobilisation lost credibility as reason for delay, Enver brought up the desperate financial situation of the Ottoman Empire and demanded 5 million Turkish lira to be transferred from Germany to Istanbul. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg was not amused, but it was finally decided that the Turkish demands were to be met in exchange for permission for Admiral Souchon to attack the Russian Black Sea fleet. Two shipments of money were smuggled through still-neutral Romania. Enver, who had previously been trying to provoke a war with Russia in September, but had been defeated in the cabinet by intervention of the Grand Vizier,<sup>70</sup> could now have his way: an order was given to Admiral Souchon on October 25, to take the Ottoman fleet into the Black Sea and to attack the Russian fleet, "if a suitable opportunity" presented itself.<sup>71</sup> On October 29, several Russian ports and vessels were shelled, mines were dropped in shipping lanes; a number of vessels were sunk either in port or at sea.

During the war and in its immediate aftermath Entente commentators were convinced, and neutral sources seemed to bear this out, that Germany had deliberately dragged the Ottoman Empire into the war, and had made itself master of Ottoman affairs between 1914 and 1918.<sup>72</sup> Ulrich Trumpener and Jehuda Wallach have convincingly argued that the event leading to the Ottoman entry into the war, the bombarding of Russian harbours and vessels in the Black Sea by the Ottoman navy, only took place after German admiral Wilhelm Souchon, then commander-in-chief of the Ottoman navy had received orders to fire from Enver Paşa.<sup>73</sup> The Ottoman Generals Ali Ihsan Sabis Paşa and Ahmet Izzet Paşa also supported this argument.<sup>74</sup>

The last attempt of the Grand Vizier to avoid war between the two countries consisted of a conciliatory note handed over to the Russian government on November 1. This endeavour was doomed to failure, as the note claimed that the attacks had been provoked by the Russian fleet; consequently it was rejected. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov informed the Ottomans that war was still not inevitable if the Turks expelled all German military

<sup>69</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 130.

<sup>70</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 39.

<sup>71</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 54.

<sup>72</sup> Morgenthau, Henry: *Secrets of the Bosphorus*. London 1918.

<sup>73</sup> See Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*; Wallach, Jehuda: *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe*. Düsseldorf 1976.

<sup>74</sup> Sabis, Ali Ihsan: *Harp Hatıralarım: Birinci Cihan Harbi*. İstanbul 1990 - 1993); Furgaç, Süheyl Izzet (ed.): *Ahmet Izzet Paşa: Feriyyadım*. İstanbul 1992 - 1993.

personnel at once.<sup>75</sup> The condition was not met, and Russia declared war on Turkey on November 2, 1914, to be followed soon afterwards by Britain and France. Thus war came to the Middle East.

### The German-Ottoman Alliance and the Jihad - the "Muslim Factor"

The proclamation of jihad has often been ascribed to a successful German "Islampolitik", which dated back to Emperor Wilhelm II's pledge of eternal friendship with world Islam in his famous speech at the grave of Saladin in Damascus.<sup>76</sup> In the political climate of the time it was not surprising that the emperor's statement suggested a German commitment to support Muslim aspirations in general and the independence of the Ottoman Empire in particular to the other Great Powers.

Yet the Entente fears that Germany would soon be able to establish hegemony over the Ottoman Empire and create a jihad with Ottoman help were exaggerated. Initially Germany entered the alliance with the Ottoman Empire with no further interest than to gain an ally able to harass Russia in the Caucasus and Britain in Egypt, and to gain a foothold for the expanded economic penetration of the Empire after the war.<sup>77</sup> Germany's embarking on a jihad-strategy was the almost singlehanded responsibility of Max Freiherr von Oppenheim. The Kaiser's commitment to *Islampolitik* greatly assisted him to overcome the initial scepticism of the German civilian and military leadership. This close contact to the Emperor, as well as his wealth, allowed Oppenheim to set up a Pan-Islamic propaganda office in Berlin. Oppenheim's long experience as a diplomat and archeologist in the Middle East made him the best candidate for such an undertaking, but the unorthodox character of the baron as well as the ambition of his project, which influential figures in the German Foreign Office and the military leadership regarded as outlandish and doomed to failure, almost prevented the project from being undertaken.

The available documentary evidence, however, points to the fact that German enthusiasm for the propagation of the Jihad seems to have been far greater than Ottoman support of this strategy. Yet this is not to say that the proclamation of Jihad was, on the part of the Ottoman government and especially the triumvirate, simply seen as a theatrical act with which to please the German allies.

On closer examination, the Young Turks found themselves in a compromised position as regarded their legitimacy to declare a "holy war." It was no secret that leading CUP thinkers, especially Ahmet Riza, long-time ideological leader of the exiled CUP in Paris, were more influenced by Positivism than Islam. Although cautious in public declarations, many

<sup>75</sup> Trumpener, Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 58.

<sup>76</sup> Trumpener, Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 112.

<sup>77</sup> Anderson, M.S.: The Eastern Question 1774 - 1923. London, New York 1966, 311.

prominent Young Turks gave, in private, free vent to their feelings that one of the elements that caused Turkey to remain backwards and inferior to European countries was "superstition", i.e. an adherence to religiously inspired behavioural patterns that seemingly prevented Muslim Turks from competing successfully with their Christian compatriots, let alone with Europeans. Probably their main antipathy was not so much directed towards Islam in general as towards a conservative or even reactionary religious establishment. From the CUP point of view, this antipathy was not entirely unfounded. The attempted counter-revolution of 1909 took place with a strong support by religious notables, its perpetrators accusing the Young Turks of having unlawfully "deposed" the sultan-caliph. Although unfounded at that time, as Abdülhamid II was nominally still sovereign of the Ottoman Empire, the CUP had after subduing the counterrevolution indeed replaced the "lawful" sultan-caliph with his brother Mehmet V Reshat, who, having been kept in virtual isolation by the paranoid Abdülhamid II, was no match for the real holders of supreme power, the leaders of the CUP.<sup>78</sup> The argument that the CUP regarded Islam as a tool for modernisation likewise might not have struck the right cords with the CUP's opponents.<sup>79</sup>

Yet there are also indications that leading individuals inside the CUP, namely Enver Paşa and Cemal Paşa, were by no means as secular or anti-religious as they were portrayed by their political enemies both within and without the Ottoman Empire. Ahmed Tarabein has pointed out that the three members of the triumvirate exhibited an inclination to different ideologies: Talaat Bey to Ottomanism, the replacement of existing ethnic, religious or proto-nationalist identities with the conviction that all Ottoman people owed loyalty to the sultan and shared one fatherland; Enver Paşa to Islamism with "a slight inclination to Turkish nationalism", and finally Cemal Paşa to Turkish nationalism with an inclination to Islamism.<sup>80</sup>

Regardless if they were personally adhering to any political-religious convictions, none of the strong men of the Ottoman Empire by the outbreak of the First World War was likely to overlook the potential of Islam as a bond between the Muslim inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire and a tool for attracting sympathy and support throughout the Muslim world.

When Enver Paşa traveled to Tripolitania in 1911 in order to organise and lead the resistance against the Italian invasion, he received an almost enthusiastic welcome from the Tripolitanian Arabs. As already mentioned, much to Enver's chagrin, this did not come from his fame as the hero of freedom and liberty, but from his, at least on paper, being a member of the house of

<sup>78</sup> Hanioglu, *Şükrü: The Young Turks in Opposition*. London 1995, 200ff.

<sup>79</sup> Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 214 – 216.

<sup>80</sup> Tarabein, Ahmed: "Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi: The Career and Thought of an Arab Nationalist", in Khalidi, *Origins of Arab Nationalism*, 109.

Osman and thereby a relative of the Caliph.<sup>81</sup> He noted that "the spirits of the Arabs are higher each day. The unexpected arrival of a relative of the caliph has made a large impression on them, and as far as the troops go, I can see and feel that my presence has meant something to them."<sup>82</sup> On another occasion, much in the same tone, he wrote "the Arabs don't know the hero of freedom Enver, but they show respect to the son-in-law of the Caliph."<sup>83</sup>

Cemal Paşa also frequently referred to "religious duty" and "holy fatherland" in his personal memoirs, and overall assumes the air of a devout Muslim.<sup>84</sup> When interviewed about his attitude to the Ottoman Arabs Cemal Paşa appealed to Islamic solidarity between Turkish and Arab Muslims: "...The Ottoman-Turkish and the Ottoman-Arab elements have to rally to the caliphate without afterthoughts if they want to survive."<sup>85</sup>

But these two prominent CUP members were not the only ones who saw no contradiction between their membership in a modernising and, at least politically, secular organisation and their religious convictions. Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi, whom we shall encounter again as one of the leading pro-Ottoman pan-Islamic propagandists, was not only a member of the CUP but also belonged to the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, Enver's private intelligence service, as did the highly active pan-Islamic activist Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish. *Shaykhülislam* Ürgüplü Hayri Bey was a member of the CUP and remained a member of the Cabinet even after the coup d'état of January 1913.

The deposition of Abdülhamid, the lawful caliph, whose prestige among Muslims outside the Ottoman Empire had been great, made a proclamation of jihad quite likely to turn out an embarrassing failure. Another problem was that since the turn of the century, and especially after 1908, the position of caliph had become a rather contested one. The contestants may be grouped in three different groups: one, which consisted of sincerely concerned Muslim scholars, who observed with anguish the ever-growing encroachment on the Muslim world by Western imperialism, and ascribed the seeming powerlessness of Muslim leaders to resist to the "corruption" of Islam. Both Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida, probably the leading Muslim thinkers of the day proposed to strengthen the position of the Muslim world by accommodating western science and inventions within Islamic law and morality. Yet 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi went one step further, and this caused great concern for the

<sup>81</sup> Enver's marriage with Naciye Sultan, a niece of Abdülhamid II., had been arranged in 1909; as Naciye was then still under age the marriage did not take place until 1914. Still Enver portrayed himself successfully as a "Damat", or son-in-law of the sultan-caliph.

<sup>82</sup> Haley, *The Desperate Ottoman*, 4.

<sup>83</sup> Haley, *The Desperate Ottoman*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> Cemal Paşa, *Erinnerungen eines türkischen Staatsmannes*, f.e. 15, 22.

<sup>85</sup> Strauss, Johann: "The Disintegration of Ottoman Rule in the Syrian Territories as Viewed by German Observers", in Philipp, Thomas, Schäbler, Birgit (eds.): *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation. Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th Century*. Stuttgart 1998, 321.



triumvirate. Kawakibi's writings envisaged the reform of Islam by taking the Caliphate from the Turks and bestowing it upon an Arab.<sup>86</sup>

Accepting al-Kawakibi's doctrine there were also some Arab leaders who were prepared to claim the caliphate for themselves, or to abolish it altogether. Sharif Husayn of Mecca is reported to have entertained such desires, as well as Khedive Abbas II Hilmi of Egypt. The two "candidates" were interlinked in a curious manner. Apparently Abbas Hilmi had attempted to have himself proclaimed caliph even before the outbreak of the war. The strongest impact he seemed to have made was not on Muslim public opinion, but on the British. His rather open activities in this direction are alleged to have driven Lord Kitchener to take up the matter of the caliphate as an additional stimulant in his negotiations with Sharif Husayn to rise in rebellion against the Ottomans.<sup>87</sup> After the outbreak of war, when Britain declared Egypt to be a protectorate and deposed the Khedive in absentia, no more was heard of his activities in order to become caliph, as Abbas Hilmi was now fully dependent on German-Ottoman support for his reinstitution after a successful campaign against Egypt.

On the other hand, 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn-Sa'ud, then the rising star of Arabian politics, and his Wahhabi followers rejected the notion that the caliph's spiritual authority should also give him temporal power over the Muslim *umma*. It was thus doubtful that they would feel bound to join in a jihad proclaimed by sultan Mehmed V.

The success of the *jihad*, which was proclaimed by *Shaykhülislam* Ürgüplü Hayri Bey on November 14, 1914, depended of course on the existence of a fervent Pan-Islamic sentiment among the Muslim peoples, in the sense that each and every Muslim regarded the sultan-caliph as his highest temporal sovereign, whose bidding was law. Even for Orientalists it was fairly obvious that the existence of such sentiments was highly doubtful.

The Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck-Hurgronje, in an excellent and highly ironical pamphlet published in New York in early 1915, lost no time in pointing out how radically his German colleagues seemed to have changed their opinion about the existence and the potential power of Pan-Islam.<sup>88</sup> Snouck-Hurgronje especially singled out two of the leading German orientalist, C.H. Becker and Martin Hartmann, who had shown themselves as fervently opposed to the very concept of Pan-Islamism in conferences less than five years before the outbreak of war. On a conference in Paris in 1910, Becker had claimed: "Si l'unité de la race noire [presumably referring to all non-European peoples, including Muslims] est un fantôme, l'unité de la race blanche est une réalité."<sup>89</sup> Hartmann had been even more outspoken when the Ottoman Empire had

<sup>86</sup> Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*. Oxford 1962, 273.

<sup>87</sup> Jankowski, James: "Egypt and Early Arab Nationalism", in Khalidi, *Origins of Arab Nationalism*, 258.

<sup>88</sup> Snouck-Hurgronje, Christiaan: *The Holy War Made in Germany*. New York 1915.

<sup>89</sup> Snouck-Hurgronje, *Holy War made in Germany*, 66.

resorted to a proclamation of jihad during the Ottoman-Italian war of 1911, by stating that the idea of a limited jihad was unheard of in Islamic law and Islamic history. Hartmann ridiculed

"...the threat of holy war, i.e. of war against all unbelievers, except against those who are expressly designated to the community by the leaders of Islam as friends of Islam. This idea is madness."<sup>90</sup>

Snouck-Hurgronje also pointed out that for a Muslim every war against a non-Muslim enemy was a jihad, and thus no specific proclamation was necessary. Indeed, both during the Tripolitanian war and the Balkan wars jihad had been proclaimed, but the situation the Ottoman Empire found itself in during November 1914 was a good deal more complicated than during the two previous conflicts. Still, as it turned out, the proclamation of a "limited jihad" does not seem to have been regarded by Muslims as entirely irrational, and appears not to have affected their decisions to fight or not to fight.

In the case of Libya, the proclamation of jihad this time had to be a "qualified" one, trying to divert the attention of the Sanusiya warriors away from Italy, formerly the enemy and now the ally of the Ottoman Empire, and to unleash them against Britain. As we shall see, the apparent illogicality of this scheme (why should Italian rule over Muslim Libya be acceptable when Britain's rule over Muslim Egypt was not?) did not prevent the Sanusiya from embarking upon attacks on Egypt. The western Egyptian harbour of al-Salum was conquered in late 1915, but reoccupied by the British in early 1916. From then on, growing concern of the Libyan notables with their own power and control over the country caused the Sanusiya to make peace with Britain and to take on Italy anew. In the case of Germany or Austria, the matter was a lot easier to solve. Germany had few colonies with hardly any Muslim population to speak of (but still, as we shall see, experienced trouble with Pan-Islamic propaganda), and the only predominantly Muslim territory controlled by Austria was Bosnia-Herzegovina. Consequently, if Muslims were to fight against "infidel oppression" it had to be in the colonial possessions of the Entente Powers. The proclamation of jihad, as well as the entire Ottoman-German Pan-Islamic propaganda, achieved vastly different results in different parts of the Muslim world.

The jihad was officially proclaimed by the Sheyhülislam in front of the Fatih Sultan Mehmed mosque; the following day, the proclamation bearing the sultan-caliph's signature was published in the daily newspapers of Constantinople. Mehmet V Reshat reminded his subjects of the attempts of the Entente states to destroy the empire, and that their endeavours were certain to be

<sup>90</sup> Snouck-Hurgronje, *Holy War made in Germany*, 63.

thwarted by the heroism of the Ottoman soldiery and the "god-sent" alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary.<sup>91</sup> On November 16 Enver Paşa followed suit. He called the *irade* about the holy war to the attention of the Ottoman army, and urged them to justify the trust and hope of 300 million Muslims, who were all fervently praying for victory: "We all have to remember, that the souls of the prophets and all the holy men are above us, and that our glorious ancestors bear witness to our actions."<sup>92</sup>

In Constantinople the jihad was enthusiastically received. It seemed to fulfil a public desire, as the Hungarian newspaper *Az Est* had already reported, demonstrations in favour of the proclamation of holy war on November 3: "Large numbers march through the city waving large green flags, dervishes howl and wave blood-soaked pieces of cloth."<sup>93</sup>

On November 16, the "Agence Ottomane" reported mass demonstrations having taken place two days earlier, which had been convened by a number of patriotic societies. The demonstrators assembled early and marched with flags and standards, on which patriotic slogans were inscribed, to Fatih Square. After the proclamation of *jihad* the deputy of Izmir held a lengthy speech. The entire crowd then marched to the ministry of war, where prayers were held for the victory of army and navy. Finally the demonstrators turned to the Porte, where orators declared that "the nation is prepared to make every sacrifice in full accord with the government." A delegation of notables was received by Sultan Mehmed V Reshat in the afternoon of the same day.<sup>94</sup>

The leaders of the Persian community in the capital sent telegrams to the Shi'ite religious leaders declaring their great joy at receiving the news of the declaration of jihad. They indicated their readiness to close their businesses and to join the Ottoman army. Persian ambassador Mirza Mahmud Khan held a public speech, in which he stressed Persia's determination to fight alongside the Ottomans against the British and the Russians.<sup>95</sup>

The *Tasvir-i Efkiar* was among the first newspapers to contemplate the relevance of the proclamation of holy war for Muslim areas outside the Empire proper. News was trickling in that Morocco had risen in revolt against the French, but the revolt had actually begun early in October and was therefore probably not connected with any Ottoman or German propaganda. The "Tasvir", analysing these encouraging developments, accordingly stated its conviction that the "first victory on the Egyptian border would fan the flames of rebellion against the British tyrants sky-high."<sup>96</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (henceforth BA/MA), File PH3/60, Newspaper clippings 1914, "Tanin", 14.11.14.

<sup>92</sup> BA/MA, PH3/60, "Agence Ottomane", November 16, 1914.

<sup>93</sup> BA/MA, PH3/60, "Az Est", November 3, 1914.

<sup>94</sup> BA/MA, PH3/60, "Agence Ottomane", November 16, 1914.

<sup>95</sup> BA/MA, PH3/60, "Az Est", November 3, 1914.

<sup>96</sup> BA/MA, PH3/60, "Tasvir-i Efkiar", November 16, 1914.

The initial reaction to the proclamation of jihad thus seemed to be promising; great successes could be expected in the Muslim-populated colonies of Britain, France and Russia, and Ottoman internal cohesion, as far as the Ottoman Muslims were concerned, could be regarded as strengthened and secured. As far as Max von Oppenheim was concerned, all that was left to do was to make sure that a sufficiently efficient Pan-Islamic propaganda effort was conducted in the Entente colonies, which would lead to all-out rebellion and revolt against colonial rule.

## **Chapter 2 - European Preoccupations with Jihad - German and Ottoman Attempts to Promote Jihad**

### **Introduction:**

Germany, the Ottoman Empire and Britain had "discovered" Pan-Islam years before the outbreak of the First World War. Some German statesmen, among them the emperor, believed that Germany might be able to use Pan-Islam when the time came to fight Britain. Sultan Abdülhamid II had used Pan-Islamic propaganda to raise the fears of colonial powers with large Muslim populations that their populations might rebel if the Ottoman Empire was seen to suffer too much under European aggression. This policy had worked to a certain extent; as we shall see, British statesmen in the years before the First World War often drew the attention of British political decision-makers to the danger of Pan-Islamic revolts if the Ottoman Sultan were to proclaim a *jihad* in the case of war against the Entente powers.

Yet there was very little tangible evidence of the existence and potential of Pan-Islam available to the Germans, the Ottomans and the British by the outbreak of war. Consequently, German and Ottoman intelligence agents in the Middle East first had to collect information about how local populations might be induced to revolt. The British, in turn, looked for means how such revolts might be prevented. As even the intelligence services dealing with European countries were newly-established by the outbreak of war, intelligence in the Middle East had a fairly non-professional, amateurish character. German intelligence agents, like their British counterparts, often succumbed to wishful thinking and prejudiced views; they were either unable or unwilling to carry out sober analysis of data. As a result of this, Western intelligence operations failed to come up with useful recommendations for their respective decision-makers. In contrast, Ottoman intelligence, notably the branch which dealt with the preservation of internal cohesion in the Ottoman Empire, was relatively successful.

The Germans and Ottomans did not restrict their activities to the collection of information or to propaganda. Twice in the course of the war Ottoman forces tried to cross the Sinai Peninsula and to attack Egypt. The strength of these forces was not sufficiently large to conquer Egypt from the British. But both Germans and Ottomans believed that the Egyptian population was only waiting for the Ottoman forces to rise in rebellion against their colonial overlords. While this hope was disappointed twice, the attempts of German and Ottoman agents to bring the Sanusiya to attack Egypt from Libya scored limited successes.

Like the propaganda operations discussed in chapters 4 and 5 most of these activities took place in the period 1914 - 1916. At that time the Ottoman Empire and Germany still possessed a certain offensive potential in the Middle

East while Britain contented itself with defensive measures of its possessions. After the summer of 1916 the tables turned. Britain gradually assumed the upper hand, while the Ottoman Empire was increasingly forced to fight on the defensive. Those local leaders who had listened to the German-Ottoman call for jihad likewise realised that Britain was on the winning side after 1916 and decided to make their peace with the British.

### European Intelligence Services before the First World War

German intelligence services before the First World War were poorly organised and funded. They consisted of the *Geheimer Nachrichtendienst des Heeres* (secret intelligence service of the army), also known as section IIIb of the German General Staff, and an even smaller sister- service in the Imperial German Navy. Both had to rely for most of their information on overt sources, such as military attachés, diplomats, consuls and the odd journalist. Section IIIb, headed by Major (later Colonel) Walter Nicolai, was preoccupied with France; only after 1905 was a Russian department founded. Its efficiency was undermined by meagre funds (15,000 pounds sterling per year). At one time Nicolai retired in frustration, though he was recalled in 1913 and moved on to head the German military secret intelligence service throughout the war.<sup>1</sup>

Britain remained the responsibility of the German naval intelligence service. Its even more desperate financial situation rendered its activities next to useless. Other areas of the world were not dealt with at all. According to Nicolai, "there was no talk, even, of a service to deal with America." There was no organised intelligence service to deal with the Middle East, neither before nor during the war.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the Germans the British, due to their broader imperial experiences and interests, had at least had some experience of intelligence work in the Middle East, Africa and India by 1914. But these experiences were seldom encouraging, especially if it came to employ native agents. An inherent racism and feeling of white superiority played a strong role in British mistrust of native spies and agents. As General Charles E. Callwell noted in his imperial war textbook "Small Wars", "Orientals" could scarcely be used with success in intelligence gathering:

"The difficulty of dealing with Orientals and savages, whether as informers or spies, is referred to in many textbooks and works of reference on reconnaissance and intelligence duties. The ordinary native found in the theatres of war peopled by coloured races lies simply for the love of the thing and his ideas of time,

<sup>1</sup> Andrew, Christopher: *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community*. London 1985, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Buchheit, Gert: *Der Deutsche Geheimdienst*. Munich 1966, 27.

numbers and distance are of the vaguest, even when he is trying to speak the truth."<sup>3</sup>

The amateurish nature of the intelligence services, their limited resources and the apparent failure of unearthing any really useful information in the years before the outbreak of the First World War had serious repercussions on the standing of the intelligence services during the war. Time and again they found that decision-makers simply were not prepared to trust the findings presented to them by the intelligence services. Churchill remained convinced of a German master plan to invade Britain long after several intelligence services had managed to prove the opposite.

The British, like the Germans, believed in the appeal of Pan-Islam to Muslims in the Entente colonies. The British feared Pan-Islamic revolts; the Germans wished to cause their outbreak. As it turned out, the British would have had no need to worry, and the Germans not to bother. But in 1914 both sides gave overwhelming importance to spectres. Decision-makers in both camps based their decisions on what they chose to believe, not on what intelligence services or individual agents and other sources laid before them as facts.

To a certain extent the small size of intelligence networks in the pre-war period, the meagre funds they had to operate with and the mediocre to abysmal quality of their agents justified such prejudiced opinions. Lack of intelligence about the existence of a given plan or stratagem did, in the minds of the decision-makers, not necessarily mean that they did not exist; the secret might just be too well guarded. Almost 50 years before the outbreak of the First World War Wilhelm Stieber, the head of the German Foreign Office Secret Field Police and father of the German intelligence services, had clearly identified this problem:

"The type of isolated observation, involving only a few spies, which has traditionally been employed to spy on other nations, has produced very limited results...A multiplicity of spies will enable us to penetrate to the best-protected secrets....Moreover, the importance and accuracy of each piece of information collected by an army of agents can be more carefully analysed in terms of the other pieces of information which verify or contradict it."<sup>4</sup>

Stieber's observation, made in 1866, elucidates the main problem the British and German governments found themselves faced with when having to

<sup>3</sup> Callwell, General Charles E.: *Small Wars. A Tactical Textbook for Imperial Soldiers*. London 1990 (reprint from 1896), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Buchheit, *Der deutsche Geheimdienst*, 6.

devise coherent policies towards the Middle East. There were no professional agents, who could be relied upon to furnish accurate information, and the number of individuals with specialist knowledge of this area was too small to enable the respective governments to cross-check information they received. Thus a very small number of individuals, often fuelled by enthusiasm and predilection for a given cause or people, were able to assume considerable clout. The outcome was a situation where, in the words of an old German proverb, the "one-eyed was king among the blind."

### **Intelligence in the Middle East:**

Indeed intelligence work in the Middle East, both on the German and the British side became the responsibility of very few individuals, with all the pitfalls that situation entailed. Most of them had prejudiced views and strong opinions about the policies they wished their respective governments to implement in the region. The outcome was that both the British and the Germans embarked upon policies which either availed them nothing (as the German jihad-propaganda) or turned out to be a curse, not a blessing in the long run (such as Britain's alliance with Sharif Husayn of Mecca or the Balfour declaration).

In addition, what little organised British or, to a lesser extent, German, intelligence gathering was undertaken in the Middle East in the years up to the outbreak of the Great War mostly concerned itself with military matters; the idea of political espionage and determination of a population's attitude had not yet found entrance into the institutional network of both states. Political intelligence collection, on which this study will largely concentrate, mostly had to rely on the diplomatic representatives of each power. While many of these diplomats were capable individuals they did not necessarily possess the qualities of a good spy which Dr. Richard Sorge, (arguably) one of the most successful spies of the twentieth century, laid down in his confession before being sentenced by a Japanese military court in 1942:

"A shrewd spy will not spend all his time on the collection of military and political secrets and classified documents. Also, I may add, reliable information cannot be procured from effort alone; espionage work entails the accumulations of information, often fragmentary, covering a broad field, and the drawing of conclusions based thereon. This means that a spy in Japan, for example, must study Japanese history and the racial characteristics of the people and orient himself thoroughly on



Japan's politics, society, economics and culture....Similarly, contacts with foreigners are essential."<sup>5</sup>

As far as intelligence in the Middle East was concerned this description of a good spy could only be applied to very few individuals. In Germany this was Max Freiherr von Oppenheim; in Britain, T.E. Lawrence. The notion holds less true for the man most prominently involved with Ottoman intelligence, Enver Paşa; but Enver Paşa's position within the decision-making apparatus of his country was far more prominent than that of either Oppenheim or Lawrence in theirs. All of them were, to a given extent, "enigmatic personalities" - the description of Lawrence as "half genius, half charlatan" somewhat applies to all three of them.<sup>6</sup> By the outbreak of war in the Middle East in November 1914 only the Ottoman Empire could rely on a well-established and fairly efficient intelligence service, the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (hereafter TM). The German and British intelligence officers who came to work in the region had to build up their networks from scratch. As they were to find out soon it was not difficult to recruit informers - but the reliability of these informers often left much to be desired, as did the accuracy of the information they procured.

### The Agents:

Both the Germans and the British built up intelligence networks which relied heavily on informants found in the big cities, mostly Istanbul. German and British intelligence officers were occasionally dispatched to tribal areas (such as Mesopotamia, Hijaz or Yemen) in order to coax or bribe influential local leaders to join the war on their respective side or to remain neutral. Lawrence was the most famous example; his Austro-Hungarian counterpart professor Alois Musil also acquired some fame.<sup>7</sup> There were also the British captains Shakespear and Leachman (working in Eastern Arabia and Mesopotamia), the Germans captain Oskar Ritter von Niedermayer and Werner Otto von Hentig (the leaders of the German expedition to Afghanistan), Major Friedrich Klein, who undertook a mission to the Shi'ite mujtahids of Karbala and Max von Oppenheim himself during a few missions.

<sup>5</sup> Deacon, Richard, West, Nigel: *Spy!*. London 1980, 37. Sorge, son of a German father and a Russian mother, became one of the leading Soviet agents during the 1920s. He is supposed to have warned Stalin of the German invasion of June 22, 1941 (which Stalin ignored). Sorge also informed Stalin that Japan did not intend to invade the Soviet Union, thus enabling the Soviets to use their far-eastern divisions against the Germans, buying much-needed time. A hard drinker and womaniser, Sorge struck up an intimate relation with an agent of Japanese counterintelligence, was arrested in 1942 and executed in late 1944.

<sup>6</sup> Porter, Brian: "Britain and the Middle East in the Great War," in Liddle, Peter (ed.): *Home Fires and Foreign Fields. British Social and Military Experience in the First World War*. London, Washington 1985, 169.

<sup>7</sup> Feigl, Erich: *Musil von Arabien. Vorkämpfer der islamischen Welt*. Vienna 1988.

Besides attempting to gain first-hand information by the dispatch of agents the Germans and the British relied on civilians who often supplied information out of political conviction. The various „national committees“ (Egyptian, Indian and Georgian) with whom the Germans cooperated were representative for this group. There were also individuals sympathetic to the Central Powers, such as the German-American Geo M. Schreiner, correspondent for the Associated Press in Istanbul, who carried out propagandistically inspired interviews with the Shayktilislam or assisted in the interrogation of POWs.<sup>8</sup>

The lion's share of information reached the Germans and the British from the "economically motivated" agents, individuals who supplied information for monetary reward. Many of them were small businessmen, owners of cafes and bars or simply the human flotsam then to be found in any large city forming a rather shadowy *demi-monde* (see appendix 1). The multitude of occupations they had almost prohibits making a characterisation of these individuals. As a rule they belonged to the lower classes of society and had no political convictions; they traded information for material gain. This group, for example in the Balkans and Istanbul, consists almost entirely of Greeks, Armenians or Jews, with the occasional adventurer thrown in for good measure.<sup>9</sup>

A specification should be made as to what we can establish as fact and what as suspicion by the authorities concerning this third group. In wartime, members of this group, never popular with the authorities (within the Ottoman Empire due to their being neither Turks nor Muslims or just being "déclassé") were prone to be viewed as "suspected persons"; in most cases, alleged guilt could not be proved. German counter-intelligence became so paranoid that a high-ranking officer in the end gave orders to exact more care before an arrest was made, as "the Ottoman police was showing signs of overwork."<sup>10</sup>

British travellers and archaeologists had been able to collect a wealth of information in the years before the First World War.<sup>11</sup> T.E. Lawrence and Leonard Woolley had undertaken a lengthy "cartographic survey" in the Sinai Peninsula in early 1914 and had reported their findings in their book, "The Wilderness of Zin."<sup>12</sup> Yet after the outbreak of war the situation changed. The British no longer had the opportunity to collect information openly and had to rely mainly on native agents to get information about the situation in Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine. These were primarily Greeks living on the coast of Asia Minor, who had access to small naval craft and were able to maintain

<sup>8</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.490.

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of spies and individuals suspected of espionage see Appendix 1, collated from German intelligence files to be found in the Federal Archive/Military Archive, Freiburg.

<sup>10</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.207.

<sup>11</sup> See Winstone, H.F.V.: *The Illicit Adventure*. London, 1982.

<sup>12</sup> Baumgartner, Johannes: "Max von Oppenheim - Lawrence of Arabia. Zwei Archäologen als politische Gegenspieler", in *Antike Welt* 12, (1999), 412.

contact with the Entente intelligence bases on the islands near the coast.<sup>13</sup> Colonel Nicolai mentioned British intelligence offices near Smyrna, in Mytilene, Cilicia and Syria, which employed mostly Greeks, Armenians and Jews.<sup>14</sup> The Ottoman government attempted to have Greek clerics condemn espionage for the enemy from the pulpit, but apparently without noticeable success. Nicolai accused the Greeks of "cowardice", but did not hide his respect for Jewish and Armenian spies, who were "very anti-Turkish, determined and ruthless and thus able to raise considerable difficulties for the Turks." In his opinion the fear of Armenian spies contributed significantly to the decision for the "harsh measures" taken against the Armenians during the war.<sup>15</sup>

According to Nicolai the activities of British spies in the Ottoman Empire usually caused Germany and Turkey no great anxiety. The involvement of these agents in preparing a British landing near Iskenderun, which might have severed the communications between Asia Minor and the Arab provinces, was on the other hand greatly feared.<sup>16</sup> The agents often appear to have been employed by the British to carry out the "dirty tasks" British officers wanted nothing to do with. Most of them belonged to the lower classes. General Liman von Sanders once narrowly escaped falling victim to a Greek cook while on an inspection tour of Gallipoli. The cook had been supplied with poison by a British agent.<sup>17</sup> Compton Mackenzie, serving as Intelligence Officer on Gallipoli and later in Athens, described Greek auxiliaries (in his own words, "bandits") on Lemnos and Mudros in fairly derogatory terms.<sup>18</sup>

More serious was the pro-Entente stance assumed by members of leading families and even government officials in Ottoman cities. Both the local military commander of Smyrna, the German general Trommer Paşa, and Marshal Liman von Sanders were continuously under surveillance by enemy spies during the latter's visit to Smyrna. Getting the collected information over to the British was greatly facilitated by a member of one of the leading families of Smyrna, who was a spy, having a brother serving on an Entente warship off the coast.<sup>19</sup> It also caused Trommer Paşa some anxiety that Rahmi Bey, the vali of Smyrna, made little secret of his pro-Entente leanings. Nicolai ascribed this, quite reasonably, to "the relations of these classes to the Entente having been older than those to Germany."<sup>20</sup> To counteract this situation one of the first

<sup>13</sup> FA/MA, File RW5/V.660, Gemp-Report: Secret Intelligence Service and Counterespionage of the Armed Forces (during the World War), Section D: Turkey, 120.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolai, Walter: *Geheime Mächte*. 2. ed. Leipzig 1924, 92.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolai, *Geheime Mächte*, 93.

<sup>16</sup> FA/MA, Gemp-Report, 122.

<sup>17</sup> FA/MA, Gemp-Report, 121.

<sup>18</sup> See also Panayotopoulos, Alcibiades: *The Greeks of Asia Minor 1908 - 1912. A Social and Political Analysis*. DPhil. Thesis Oxford 1983; Smith, Michael Llewellyn: *Ionian Vision. Greece in Asia Minor 1919 - 1922*. London 1973.

<sup>19</sup> FA/MA, Gemp-Report, 120.

<sup>20</sup> Nicolai, *Geheime Mächte*, 94.

security measures taken by the Ottoman government after entry into the war was to cross-examine and, if necessary, remove those officials found to have too close relations with the Entente powers - one of the most prominent victims being Bedri Bey, prefect of the Istanbul Police.<sup>21</sup> While this measure was implemented swiftly and with good success later in the war the Germans had reason to complain about excessive Ottoman leniency in the treatment of General Townshend, who had capitulated at Kut al-Amara in May 1916. The general was interned under comfortable conditions in Istanbul and was allowed to move freely in the city, even to visit neutral embassies, from where he was suspected to send information to the British.<sup>22</sup> General Townshend's fate itself, on the other hand, indicated how deficient British intelligence gathering in the Middle East was; after all it was a blatant underrating of Ottoman fighting strength in Mesopotamia which had led to the over-optimistic advance on Kut and the subsequent capitulation of the besieged British force.

The reasons for these deficiencies were not necessarily incompetence or over-optimism of responsible individuals, but bureaucratic confusion. In terms of intelligence the Middle Eastern war theatre was split between areas controlled by the home government in London and areas which were the responsibility of the Government of India. The aims pursued by the two governments were by no means always identical. There was considerable rivalry and antagonism, concerning both the conduct of operations in the Middle East during the war and the policies to be implemented after the war was won - which was by no means a certainty in summer 1916. The roots of this problem had been planted a long time before the outbreak of the First World War.

### British Preoccupations with Pan-Islam - British Fears of Jihad

In the decades before the outbreak of the First World War the British had been able to observe the Pan-Islamic propaganda which Sultan Abdülhamid II had conducted and had come to the conclusion that Pan-Islamic revolts were indeed to be feared if the Ottoman sultan were to proclaim a *jihad*. British intelligence operations in the Middle East aimed at finding the means how to counter such a threat.

Since the end of the nineteenth century a dichotomy in British attitudes to the Ottoman Empire had developed, which was to have considerable repercussions on intelligence activities during the First World War. The home government gave paramount importance to the alliance with France and

<sup>21</sup> Bedri Bey became vali of Bursa, and was succeeded by Ismail Canbulat Bey, who later became minister of the interior after Talaat Bey's accession to the Grand Vezirate. See Stoddard, Philip H.: The Ottoman Government and the Arabs. A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. Unpublished PhD. Thesis Princeton 1963, 48; FA/MA, File RM40/V.4, 12.11.14.

<sup>22</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V. 678, 20.03.1917.

therefore Russia, which was the power most hostile to the Ottoman Empire and coveted the possession of Istanbul, the "Rome of orthodox Christianity." In the opinion of the home government Britain was unable to grant Ottoman desires for protection against Russian aggression; yet the situation looked quite different for the Government of India, which feared the potential of the Ottoman Empire to stir up unrest among Indian Muslims through Pan-Islamic propaganda. Thus the government of India continuously urged the British government to pursue a conciliatory policy towards the Ottoman Empire. Occasionally there were attempts to mould both of these convictions into one consistent policy. In 1911, Mr. Nicolson, the Foreign Office Permanent Under-Secretary warned his Foreign Secretary against being too lenient on the Ottoman Empire for fear of fervent Pan-Islamic agitation likely to succeed if the Ottoman Empire should be allowed to recover from the present crisis:

"This would only assist towards the creation of a power which, I think, in the not far distant future - should it become thoroughly consolidated and established - would be a very serious menace to us and also to Russia. It would be curious if, in the twentieth century, we witnessed a revival of the Ottoman Empire of the seventeenth century, and there is the additional danger that it would be able to utilise the enormous Mussulman population under the rule of Christian countries. I think that this Pan-Islamic movement is one of our greatest dangers in the future and is indeed far more of a menace than the "Yellow Peril." Germany is fortunate in being able to view with comparative indifference the growth of the great Mussulman military power, she having no Mussulman subjects herself, and a union between her and Turkey would be one of the gravest dangers to the equilibrium of Europe and Asia."<sup>23</sup>

Nicolson's statement contains a number of interesting points. Not only does it emphasise how seriously the Ottoman question was taken by Britain, but he also already foresaw the likelihood of an alliance between Germany and Turkey, and the potential problems this might provoke. However, consistency was not a particular strength of British policy-making in the Middle East. If Nicolson had advocated a firm stance on the Turks in January 1911, in October of the same year he advocated caution and conciliation when dealing with the CUP government:

"Any act of a determined character which we might take in those regions would produce a very far-reaching effect and, were we to

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<sup>23</sup> Heller, Joseph: *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire 1908 – 1914*. London 1983, 39.

alienate the Turkish government by any acts of force, we might feel the effects pretty soon in Egypt and Persia, and perhaps even in India."<sup>24</sup>

This worry led the Government of India to extend the responsibilities of its fledgling intelligence service to the Middle East in the first decade of the 20th century. Section (W) of the intelligence branch of the Government of India had been responsible for Persia, Turkey in Asia, Baghdad and Russia in Asia since 1892. It was under-staffed and under-funded; this had Lord Kitchener as Commander-in-Chief worried about the possibility of expanding it during wartime; also he believed that its small number of informers made it impossible to use it for sound military intelligence.<sup>25</sup> To redress the situation a proper intelligence service, comprising some 30 sepoys commanded and trained by a staff captain, was founded in 1906. In January 1905 the respective responsibilities of London and Simla had been allotted. The Government of India assumed control of operations in Aden, the Protectorate, Arabia East of a line from Bab al-Mandab to Basrah, and for Persia and the Gulf. The remainder of Arabia and the Ottoman Empire was to be the responsibility of the home government in London.

The Indian intelligence officers in the Middle East, a rather loosely organised group, reported to the British resident at the south Persian port of Bushire, who also doubled as consul-general for the Gulf and Southern Persia and agent of the viceroy. British NCOs as well as native informers were used to procure a steady flow of information, which was then passed on to the Indian government at Simla. Famous names among these officers included W.H.I. Shakespear, C.C.R. Murphy, A.T. Wilson, N.N.E. Bray and G.E. Leachman. By 1914 these men had formed a "collective view" of the peoples of the area and the condition of the Ottoman Empire in general. They were pro-Arab, contemptuous of Persians and anti-Turkish and expected the Ottoman Empire to collapse soon, which in their opinion was a welcome development.<sup>26</sup> These views probably contributed to costly errors in British military and political strategy in the region.

The London-based British intelligence service concerned itself mostly with Palestine and Lebanon, local headquarters being Cairo and Damascus. Mesopotamia, which was to become one of the most important theatres of war in the region, was only covered by three individuals, namely Shakespear, Leachman and Gertrude Bell. The men mostly worked with the tribes in Iraq, while Mrs. Bell was one of the few "all-rounders," who was also to serve in

<sup>24</sup> Heller, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire*, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Heller, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire*, 79.

<sup>26</sup> Morris, Peter: "Intelligence and Its Interpretation: Mesopotamia 1914 - 1916," in Andrew, Christopher, Noakes, Jeremy (eds.): *Intelligence and International Relations, 1900 - 1945*. Exeter 1987, 77 - 78.

both intelligence services: that of the government of India and that of London, from which the Arab Bureau in Cairo was to evolve.<sup>27</sup>

British intelligence work in the region was greatly hampered by the fact that Cairo and Simla often pursued mutually contradictory policies. During the three months of Ottoman neutrality from August to early November 1914 two opposing camps emerged: the Government of India and the India Office on the one side, and the Foreign Office and the military intelligence services in Cairo on the other. The first clash occurred immediately after the Ottoman entry into the war in November 1914. Sir Louis Mallet, last pre-war British ambassador to Istanbul, had proposed to court the Arab nationalist leaders then in Egypt; Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey had decided to pursue this idea, and the Cairo authorities had initiated talks. Their efforts concentrated on two individuals: 'Aziz 'Ali al-Masri and Shaykh Rashid Rida. Britain offered to support Arab independence in return for Arab military assistance. The offer was fairly non-committal and left the details to be worked out after Arab independence had been won. Col. Gilbert Clayton, head of the political intelligence section in Cairo, had contacted 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri as early as August 16, 1914. 'Aziz 'Ali proposed to create an independent Arab state (consisting of Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula) by an armed rebellion against the Ottomans. Britain was to aid this rebellion by support in terms of finance and equipment. At that time the British had regarded the proposal as premature; the Ottoman Empire was still neutral, and was thought likely to remain so, given the strong position of the anti-war faction in the Ottoman cabinet.<sup>28</sup>

'Aziz 'Ali's reaction to this interview demonstrated that the British had seriously underestimated their negotiating partner: he immediately warned the members of *al-Ahd* ("The Covenant", an Arab nationalist society mostly consisting of Arab Ottoman officers) that no steps should be undertaken to foster revolt in the Arab provinces. Rather than gain independence for the Arabs, this might lead to European conquest. At the end of October Masri approached the British again. War with Turkey seemed to be imminent, and he thought that the British might be grateful for assistance. They had been unable to preserve Ottoman neutrality and might be inclined to make concessions. Masri's new plan envisaged him travelling to Basrah. There he intended to contact tribal leaders in the Arabian Peninsula (especially Ibn Sa'ud) through Sayyid Talib al-Naqib and to gather a large Arab force, which was to advance on to Baghdad and Mosul. 'Aziz 'Ali estimated the probable size of the force to be approximately 15,000. His concluding demand was quite contrary to the interests of the Government of India. On no account were British troops to be

<sup>27</sup> Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence*, 80.

<sup>28</sup> Leaders of this faction were Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha and minister of finance Cavid Bey.

landed in Mesopotamia. The Arabs would regard this as proof of British imperialist intentions and cease to show the British any further goodwill.<sup>29</sup>

'Aziz 'Ali's stipulation was ignored. An expeditionary force from India landed on the island of Fao, in the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab, in early November 1914. Basrah was taken on November 23. The government of India regarded this as a necessary action to demonstrate British military strength and to deny lower Mesopotamia to the Ottomans as a base from which they might attack British installations in south-western Iran. In contrast, Cairo was worried about the suspicion with which British operations in the region were now regarded by the Arab nationalist leaders. Clayton and Ronald Storrs, oriental secretary in the British High Commission in Cairo pressed for continued support of Arab nationalist aspirations. Masri himself was outraged. On receiving the news of the invasion he replied "Well done, Mr. Clayton, we have nothing more to talk about..."<sup>30</sup> The Cairo authorities managed to placate him; it was agreed to send him to Iraq in order to carry out his proposals. To this the Government of India objected strongly. Only British and Indian troops were to be used in the region to avoid any possible political entanglement with local auxiliaries. They might later make demands the British would be unable - or unwilling - to satisfy. The British (or, more precisely, Indian) attitude was still one of confident euphoria. The Ottoman forces were expected to be quickly subdued; consequently Arab allies were regarded rather as a nuisance than as a help. In 1916, after two serious defeats, this attitude had changed beyond recognition, and again plans were made to send Masri to Iraq. The resistance of the Government of India and the continued intention of Britain to remain non-committal towards Arab aspirations put paid to the proposal.<sup>31</sup> By now 'Aziz 'Ali was thoroughly disenchanted and became an open opponent of the British. In February 1917 he resigned his post as chief of staff of the Sharifian army and went to exile in Spain.<sup>32</sup>

Negotiations with Shaykh Rashid Rida centred on the idea to enlist the help of Rida, a leading pan-Islamist of the day, to counter the Ottoman call for jihad. Rida propagated a moderate version of pan-Islam, and had not thrown in his lot with the Germans and the Ottomans like Muhammad Farid Bey, head of the *Hizb al-Watan* (Egyptian National Party), and the agitator shaykh 'Abd al-Aziz Shawish. The British were not so much afraid of a Muslim uprising in Egypt, but of the effect pan-Islamic propaganda might have on their other largely Muslim-populated possessions.<sup>33</sup> Rida was asked to send envoys to the

<sup>29</sup> Abi Shakra, Ziyad Raafat: *British Wartime Propaganda, the Arabs and the Arab Bureau*. Unpublished MA thesis Beirut 1997, 5 – 17.

<sup>30</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 36. G. Wyman Bury, in charge of combatting pan-Islamic propaganda in Egypt, noted that "this activity is a wasted effort, as anyone who



Ottoman Empire in order to propagate the political aims of the *Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya al-Idariyya al-Uthmaniyya* (Ottoman Decentralisation Party), of which he was one of the leading members. The idea was to exploit the political discontent of the Arabs with the centralising policies of the CUP to Britain's advantage. To this end Rida also was to contact influential leaders in the Arabian peninsula, who were members of his *Jam' iyyat al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya* (Arab Unity Society), a secret society founded in 1911. Besides potentates from the Arab Peninsula the society also had preachers and students from Rida's pan-Islamic school *Dar al-Da'wa wa al-Irshad* (House of Summons and Guidance) as members.

Rida indeed sent several pairs of envoys to Syria, Beirut and Basrah. However, on arrival at Basrah, the two envoys, Muhib al-Din al-Khatib and 'Abd al-'Aziz al 'Atiqi, became victims of the then existing dualism in British policy in the Middle East. The Indian authorities at Basrah had them arrested and imprisoned; the main reason quoted being that the propaganda material they were carrying was "pro-Islamic and anti-Christian (which might be construed as anti-British)." The Cairo authorities, on enquiring into the matter, accepted this reasoning and did not insist on the release of the envoys.<sup>34</sup>

Rida obviously felt duped and issued a warning to the British. They were ill-advised to belittle the appeal of the Ottoman jihad among the Muslims; while they doubtlessly felt sympathy for the Ottoman Empire or the sultan-caliph, they also were aware that Britain and the other Entente powers seemed to be intent on territorial conquests.<sup>35</sup>

This lay at the heart of Rida's becoming a supporter of Arab nationalism in early 1915. He was convinced that the great powers intended to dismember the Ottoman Empire after the war; thus an Arab state had to be created in order to maintain at least one independent Muslim state. Rida thought that the Arabs were well qualified to rule themselves; however, should Britain not be prepared to grant Arab demands, the British faced "the great danger of a permanent alliance between Muslim opinion and the great power of Germany." Such thinly veiled blackmail was frequently used by local potentates and notables during the war. They usually were quite successful and proved how much more shrewd they were in using Britain and Germany for their own interests than vice versa.<sup>36</sup>

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knew [the Egyptians] could have told them [the Turks]; the effendis abstained from the crudities of personal service and confined themselves to stirring up the town riff-raff, who wanted a safer form of villainy than open riot, and the fellahin, who wanted a safe market for their produce and easy taxation, both of which they stood to lose by violence."

<sup>34</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 45 – 49.

<sup>35</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 54. Unknowingly, Rida was correct. In March 1915, Kitchener had expressed his view that "Mesopotamia must not be left to the Arabs"; its possession would secure "all passages to the holy places." On the understanding that Russia was to have Istanbul after the war, the caliphate also was to be transferred to Arabia - where it would be under British control.

<sup>36</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 56.

The British were outraged by Rida's threat. Sir Mark Sykes, who had received the warning, noted that

"...Shaykh Rashid Rida is a hard uncompromising fanatical Moslem, the mainspring of whose ideas is the desire to eliminate Christian influence and to make Islam a political power in as wide a field as possible....his mental arrogance is I think attributable chiefly to the idea that Great Britain is afraid of Islam and that British policy first and foremost is planned to soothe Moslem opinion and to conciliate Moslem prejudice...It is quite impossible to come to any understanding with people who hold such views, and it may be suggested that against such a party force is the only argument that they can understand."<sup>37</sup>

Sir Mark's observations had only one slight flaw: Britain was not in a position to use sufficient force to crush the Ottoman armies, and during 1915 the situation got steadily worse. In summer 1915 the Husayn-McMahon correspondence opened a new possibility to break the existing deadlock on the Middle Eastern fronts. Husayn demanded an independent Arab state in return for Arab military help for the British. During the negotiations Sir Reginald Wingate, sirdar of the Egyptian army, proposed to consult Rida on the matter. Rida noted that the agreement ignored most of the Arab demands. He was well aware that Husayn's main motive was dynastic self-interest and submitted a counterproposal to Clayton in late October 1915, which contained a number of stipulations to prevent the Arab state from becoming a dynastic affair of the Hashemites. The state was to be decentralised and constitutional; while the caliph - to be chosen from the house of the Sharif of Mecca - was to have control over religious life temporal power was to be given to an elected "President of the Arabian Government."<sup>38</sup> Yet the British had already committed themselves to Husayn; thus Rida's scheme was completely ignored.<sup>39</sup>

Realising the problems posed by the lack of unified planning and command for British military and political operations in the Middle East Clayton and Sykes suggested the establishment of a central bureau to deal with Arab affairs in late 1915. The bureau had a twofold aim: first, "to harmonise British political activity in the Near East, and to keep the Foreign Office, India Office, War Office, Admiralty and Government of India simultaneously informed of the general tendency of German and Turkish policy." Its second function was to "co-ordinate propaganda in favour of Great Britain among non-

<sup>37</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 59.

<sup>39</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 60.

Indian Moslems without clashing with the susceptibilities of Indian Moslems and the Entente Powers."<sup>40</sup>

The first task was to be performed by circulation of regularly issued bulletins, and the second by the fabrication of specifically designed propaganda material. Furthermore networks of native agents in Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and Syria were to be formed in order to "stimulate pro-Entente and anti-German feeling."<sup>41</sup> After lengthy deliberations, the bureau eventually was set up in Cairo; it was organised as a section of the "Soudan Intelligence Department", but stood under the ultimate control of the Foreign Office. Sykes' suggestions were unanimously approved. The Arab Bureau swiftly became the main institution to furnish the British and Indian governments with information about Arab affairs and played a prominent role in the politics of the Arab Revolt. While thus the British had managed to set up a proper apparatus to gather and analyse intelligence, the necessity of such an apparatus was rather swiftly eroded by British military fortunes in the region taking a turn for the better. Military developments greatly reduced the need for Britain to cooperate with indigenous allies in the region.

From late 1916 Britain's military and strategic situation improved considerably. There was now the possibility to defeat the Ottomans in the battlefield without local assistance. The Arab Revolt had broken out in summer 1916, but proved militarily disappointing and was to become a political embarrassment to haunt the British for long after the war. In this last phase military intelligence acquired paramount importance. The third battle of Gaza and that of Meggido at the end of 1917 were pivotal events which were prepared meticulously by a successful employment of disinformation; also human means to acquire information were increasingly replaced by technical means, such as the use of spotter planes and interception of radio signals.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the war Britain had some distinct advantages over the Ottoman Empire and over Germany in the region as far as intelligence gathering was concerned. Together with the French Navy the Royal Navy enjoyed absolute sea superiority over the Aegean, Mediterranean and other coasts of Turkey, and Britain had bases in Egypt and later Mesopotamia (achieving the position of forward base from India), which her enemies were unable to attack or to conquer. It was therefore able to carry out intelligence forays along a coastline it was impossible for the Ottomans to close off completely. Intelligence operations had different aims depending on the area and the phase of general British strategy. The intelligence officers of the Government of India in Mesopotamia and the Orientalists of the Arab Bureau had both to furnish information about the region and to advise how the support of the local Arab

<sup>40</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 65.

<sup>41</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 65.

<sup>42</sup> See Sheffy, *Yigal: British Military Intelligence in the Palestine Campaign 1914 – 1918*. London 1997.

population might be gained. As an additional advantage the British intelligence bases on the islands near the coast of Asia Minor and Syria were able to receive information from a sympathetic local population (mostly Greeks in Asia Minor and a Zionist organisation called "Nili" in Palestine). Such agents furnished information concerning all aspects of the military, economic and political situation in the respective region. These were the challenges both Germany and the Ottoman Empire faced in mounting their own intelligence operations.

### **German Intelligence in the Middle East - Max Freiherr von Oppenheim**

Information about the areas not covered by the rudimentary German intelligence services (that is to say, all areas with the exception of France, Russia and Britain) were traditionally procured by the diplomatic service; but the information thus to be gained usually was limited. The diplomats in most cases lacked knowledge of local vernaculars; their social contacts included only the indigenous elite or fellow Europeans; and third, their lifestyle often isolated diplomats from the ordinary population of their host countries. Embassies and consulates were located in separate quarters of cities, thus adding geographical to social segregation.

In contrast Max Freiherr von Oppenheim was no ordinary diplomat. Born in 1860 into the wealthy Oppenheim banking dynasty in Cologne, he had at an early age decided to spend his life as a traveller, dedicated to research of Arab and Islamic culture, art, history, architecture and archaeology. Paternal pressure had compelled him to read law initially; after completion of his studies, he undertook his first journeys to Greece, Turkey and North Africa.

Oppenheim's first prolonged stay in Cairo was in 1892, where he set up a "double life." He lived in a small house in Bab al-Louk rather than in the European quarter "like an indigenous Paşa," got himself a "temporary wife" and took to socialising intensively with Egyptian personalities. Oppenheim spent the years 1896 - 1910 attached to the German consulate-general in Cairo. During these years Oppenheim pursued his academic interests and a vivid social life, which led him to become an acquaintance of most prominent personalities in Cairo, both Egyptian and foreign. Oppenheim also was a rather vainglorious man who took himself and his opinions very seriously. He sent in total over 500 reports to Berlin, yet it is not quite clear if these were called for by the German Foreign Office or not; in any case, Oppenheim never advanced beyond attaché status in the German Foreign Service. Trumpener regards Oppenheim's Jewish descent as the main obstacle to his career, as the Foreign Service was then still dominated by an "old aristocracy."<sup>43</sup> He alleges that this anti-Semitic attitude

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<sup>43</sup> Although Max von Oppenheim was a "Freiherr (Baronet)", his family had only been knighted in the generation of his father, who had been made a baronet by the Emperor of Austria in the 1850s. The knighthood was based on the condition of his father's conversion

was responsible for the continuous underrating of the value of Oppenheim's reports.<sup>44</sup> Yet in all probability it was the baron's egocentric and self-promoting character which stood in his way. Oppenheim made many enemies throughout his years in Cairo, both out of political and personal reasons. David Hogarth, later director of British intelligence in Cairo, once referred to him as "that chattering, egotistical Jew",<sup>45</sup> and both pro-British and pro-French Egyptian newspapers frequently vilified Oppenheim as "the Kaiser's personal agent on a mission to stir up trouble among the Muslims."<sup>46</sup>

The scant attention paid to his reports by the German Foreign Office notwithstanding Oppenheim was an active and keen observer of the Near East. The baron's self-professed "strictly neutral and observing role"<sup>47</sup> was often regarded in quite a different light by the British. Oppenheim established good relations with Khedive Abbas Hilmi II,<sup>48</sup> but also with Ghazi Mukhtar Paşa, the Ottoman High Commissioner in Egypt.<sup>49</sup> His long personal friendship with Ahmad Shafik Paşa, the chairman of the Egyptian cabinet of the Khedive, was helpful both to obtain information from the Egyptian court and to effect the (pretended) reconciliation between Enver Paşa and Sharif Husayn in 1915. His contacts also included Sa'ad Zaghlul, Yusuf Bey al-Sadik and Adli Paşa Yeghen. More interesting than the list of his acquaintances was the conclusion Oppenheim drew about their political standing; all were in his opinion fervently Pan-Islamic and patriotic, obsessed by the desire to rid their country from the infidel occupier.<sup>50</sup> This observation probably gave Oppenheim the idea of German Pan-Islamic propaganda in the case of war between Germany and Britain. Popular Islam appeared to confirm his views: Oppenheim's comments on the *zîkr* (religious rituals) of several Egyptian *turuq* (Islamic brotherhoods) closed with the remark "all fanatically believing in Allah, their God."<sup>51</sup> Among his acquaintances Oppenheim also counted Muhammad Abduh, which occasionally led the British to suspected the baron of being "the Kaiser's spy" intent on conspiring with the prominent Islamic moderniser Abduh. Indeed the baron had considerable talent for stepping on the toes of the British: Massud Bey, whom he hired to supply him with regular clippings from Egyptian newspapers, was none other than the temporary editor-in-chief of the nationalist

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from Jewry to Catholicism; likewise, his uncle, director-general of the Oppenheim bank, had been made a Prussian baronet and was forced to convert to Protestantism.

<sup>44</sup> Trumpener, Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 77.

<sup>45</sup> Winstone, H.F.V.: *The Illicit Adventure*. London 1982, 133.

<sup>46</sup> Oppenheim Private Archive (OPA). Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, *Autobiography* (unpublished and fragmented, hereafter AB), Chapter VII, 2.

<sup>47</sup> OPA. Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, AB: „My Political Curriculum Vitae“, 1.

<sup>48</sup> OPA, AB, Chapter VI: "My Time and Activities during My Sojourn in Cairo, 1896 - 1909", 13ff.

<sup>49</sup> OPA, AB, Chapter VI, 41.

<sup>50</sup> OPA, AB, Chapter VI, 42ff.

<sup>51</sup> OPA, AB, Chapter VI, 53.

newspaper *Al-Muayyad*.<sup>52</sup> During the Aqaba-affair of 1906 Oppenheim managed to convince himself that the Egyptians were not only pan-Islamic and patriotic, but also pro-German. At his instigation, the Egyptian director of the Cairo branch of the German Orient-Bank managed to persuade Egyptian notables to invest "many millions of pounds" in this branch, without demanding interest.<sup>53</sup>

Oppenheim's interests however far surpassed Egypt; he dealt intensively with the Sanusiya, managed to get into contact with leading personalities of this order and to acquire a small library about it. This made him intensely unpopular with the French, who regarded the order as a continuous danger to their possessions in Northern Africa as the Sanusiya had many members in Tunisia and was well-known for its anti-colonialism.<sup>54</sup> Other topics of interest to Oppenheim were Sultan Abdülhamid II's Pan-Islamic propaganda efforts and what he termed the "Pan-Arabic" Movement.<sup>55</sup> In 1897 Oppenheim had struck up a life-long friendship with Amir Shakib Arslan, who influenced Oppenheim's views greatly. He heaped praise on Arslan, whom he regarded as the "most gifted oriental he ever met"<sup>56</sup> and "the best and most productive Arab man of letters", besides being a fervent Pan-Arabist.<sup>57</sup> Still, Arslan exposed a very favourable attitude to Germany:

"Germany does not wish to make conquests in the Near East; quite the contrary, she wishes to see a strong Orient, in which she is willing to enter into a free economic and cultural competition with all other European countries and the United States."<sup>58</sup>

While neither the first nor the only German to envisage a heavy reliance on Pan-Islam in the Ottoman Empire's struggle for survival, Oppenheim was the first one to attempt to use this to Germany's advantage. Oppenheim's predecessors included such illustrious personalities as Friedrich Naumann, the famous liberal. With almost prophetic foresight Naumann had stated as early as 1889, that in case of a world war "... the Caliph of Constantinople will once more uplift the standard of the Holy War. The sick man will raise himself for the last time to cry aloud to Egypt, to the Sudan, to East Africa, Persia,

<sup>52</sup> OPA, AB, Chapter VI, 99.

<sup>53</sup> OPA, AB, "Topics of My Reports to Berlin", I: indigenous Egyptian affairs, 106.

<sup>54</sup> OPA, AB, "Topics of My Reports to Berlin", VI: African-Islamic Affairs, 125.

<sup>55</sup> OPA, AB, "Topics of My Reports to Berlin, VII: Miscellaneous Islamic, Pan-Islamic and Pan-Arabic Affairs, 134ff.

<sup>56</sup> OPA, AB: Chapter VIII: "Journeys and Affiliations to other Diplomatic Representations in the Service of the Foreign Office 1896 - 1909", 4.

<sup>57</sup> OPA, AB: Chapter VIII, 6.

<sup>58</sup> OPA, AB: Chapter VIII, 7.

**Afghanistan and India: 'War against England!' It is not unimportant to know who will support him on his bed, when he utters this cry."**<sup>59</sup> Shortly before the outbreak of war an anonymous German writer advised the German government to establish relations with influential personalities in British, French and Russian colonies: "Uprisings provoked in wartime by political agents...must break out simultaneously with the destruction of the means of communication and must have a single directing head who can be found among influential political or religious figures. The Egyptian school [of nationalists] is particularly well qualified for this work..."<sup>60</sup>

General Bronsart von Schellendorff, the German chief of staff of the Ottoman Army recommended to his superior the declaration of jihad by the sultan. "When the Russians declare war (following the attacks on the Russian Black Sea Fleet outlined in the first item of the report), the Padishah must declare a jihad against the common enemies of Germany, the Ottoman state and Austria-Hungary."<sup>61</sup> This idea had already been expressed in the highest echelons of the German military; the German chief of staff wrote to Foreign Minister Jagow as early as August 5, 1914, that "...it is of the utmost importance to incite rebellions in India, Egypt and the Caucasus. The agreement with Turkey will give the Foreign Office the opportunity to carry out this plan by arousing the fanaticism of the World of Islam."<sup>62</sup> German expectations from pan-Islamic agitation during the initial months of the war assumed great dimensions. On February 16, 1915 Bronsart submitted a memorandum "The Distribution of Africa", with the subheading "Germany and Islam". Having summed up the two main obstacles for European supremacy in Africa, the "Ethiopian" movement and "fanatical Islam", the Ottoman chief of staff recommended to the German government to use "Islam" to evict other European powers from Africa. Thus the Ethiopian movement could also be subdued. Turkey's reward was to be a large North African empire, whose boundaries would be guaranteed by Germany; south of the 12th degree northern latitude Africa was to be German. The seat of the Caliph should be relocated from Istanbul to Cairo, for reasons of "a more central position." By fervent propaganda in Sudan and Somaliland eventually all other European powers could be "hunted out" of Africa by the black Africans under Turkish and German leadership (mostly provided by settlers and colonial officials from German south-west and east Africa). Aden also was to be conquered. The advantage of such actions was obvious: acquisition of huge territories, infliction of grievous losses on the enemy, which, best of all, "would not need any forces needed for the war in Europe" as, Bronsart believed, sufficient troops could be raised locally in Africa. The general, however, raised a warning finger at the

<sup>59</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 14.

<sup>60</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 17.

<sup>62</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 17.

end of his proposal: "The Muslims may not undertake this operation on their own. We Germans must assume the lead and will later guarantee the boundaries to the Muslims."<sup>63</sup>

While Bronsart's ideas appear grossly exaggerated, they are indicators of how pervasive the idea of the "Great Pan-Islamic Revolt", which could lead to a reshuffling of the cards of world power, was for some in responsible positions of the German military or civilian leadership. General von Falkenhayn, then German Chief of Staff, had already communicated rather detailed plans for the instigation of this revolt to the military attaché at the embassy in Istanbul. The plan set out the administrative structure for the campaign, as well as the areas to be conquered (Afghanistan, Persia, the Caucasus, Arabia, Sudan, Egypt, Tripolitania and India). It also contained a list of personnel to be used. The Austrian traveller and orientalist Alois Musil and Dr. Prüfer from the Foreign Office were to be sent to the Arab provinces in order to conduct anti-British propaganda. Furthermore an expedition consisting of the famous Africa traveller Leo Frobenius and Professor Moritz, former director of the Khedivial library at Cairo, was to be despatched to stir up the tribes. Contacts had to be made with Egyptian nationalists in exile and in the country, India and Tripolitania. The operation was to be directed from Istanbul.<sup>64</sup>

As early as August 1914 the Germans attempted to realise such ambitious proposals. Oppenheim was reactivated and posted to the Near Eastern Department under Freiherr Langwerth von Simmern. He had already formed an idea of how to address the matter at hand. In a memorandum for Imperial Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg he proposed to create an institution to both gather and use information obtained from Near Eastern and other Muslim countries (although the focus later expanded considerably). Besides the actual use, to which this institution might be put, the baron also had personal motives. The memorandum left the reader with no other option, than to conclude that the ideal director of the institution would be none other than the author himself. Having set up his Intelligence Office for the East in the Foreign Office, Oppenheim managed to get posted to the Ottoman Empire in March 1915. Yet the planning and execution of German political intelligence operations remained the joint responsibility of the German Foreign Office and the general staff. Several of these operations will be dealt with as case studies in the next chapter. German military intelligence remained rather disorganised throughout the war. German intelligence officers at individual Ottoman army HQs had mixed feelings about the employment of local agents, who often were double agents. On the other hand the information they managed to gather, especially about the Russian forces in the Caucasus, was regarded as very useful by the German

<sup>63</sup> Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (hereafter PAFO), File R21128, AZ A10334, Berlin, 16.02.1915: Fritz Bronsart von Schellendorff: Die Aufteilung Afrikas - Deutschland und der Islam.

<sup>64</sup> PAFO, File R21128, Berlin, 09.02.1915: Falkenhayn to Military Attaché Constantinople.



general staff for estimating Russian strength on the German and Austrian eastern fronts.<sup>65</sup>

German military intelligence also suffered from a lack of organisation. From December 1914 onwards at least three institutions in the Ottoman Empire reported independently to Nicolai's section IIIb in Berlin: Major von Laffert, the German military attaché in Istanbul, general Liman von Sanders as commander of the German military mission and field marshal von der Goltz, commander in chief of the Ottoman 6th army. Their reports often contradicted each other and were, on the whole, not a very useful source of information. An intelligence service which IIIb had prepared to set up in Turkey immediately before the war proved a failure; intelligence gathering within the Ottoman Empire remained an almost purely Ottoman affair. Only during the Gallipoli campaign did the German intelligence services in the Mediterranean furnish information for the Ottoman general staff.<sup>66</sup> A proper German intelligence service, in the form of liaison officers with Turkish intelligence agencies, was only established from 1917 onwards when prince Georg of Bavaria was posted to the Ottoman general staff as representative of section IIIb. This was too late to be of any operative use.<sup>67</sup>

Thus the only properly organised intelligence service in the Middle East at the disposal of the Central Powers was the Ottoman, most notably Enver Paşa's "force speciale", the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa.

### Ottoman Intelligence - the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa

Each member of the triumvirate created his own personal "force speciale" before and during the war years. Unfortunately we are unable to find out much about those of Cemal Paşa or Talaat Bey due to a lack of sources.<sup>68</sup> Even the bulk of the information on Enver Paşa's organisation, the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (henceforth TM) comes from a secondary source: Dr. Philip H. Stoddard's PhD. dissertation of 1963, which in turn was largely based on interviews. As even most Turkish writers have largely based their works on Dr. Stoddard's study, the following description of Ottoman intelligence activities is therefore based almost completely on this landmark study.

The TM did not mature into a proper intelligence service with a firmly established position within the bureaucracy. The term „mahsusa" appears to have been attached to the organisation by reason of the fact that it was not answerable to any ministry, but only to the Grand Vizier and Minister of War

<sup>65</sup> FA/MA, File RW5/V.44: Gempp-Report, appendix 16: Report by First Lieutenant Dr. Guse about Intelligence and Espionage Operations in the Caucasus.

<sup>66</sup> FA/MA, File RW5/V.44: Gempp-Report, vol.5: Der geheime Nachrichtendienst auf dem Balkan, 116 – 129.

<sup>67</sup> FA/MA, File PH3/660, Gempp-Report, 127.

<sup>68</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 1.

directly.<sup>69</sup> It is not exactly clear when the TM was founded, though it appears to have been formed out of those Ottoman officers and servicemen who were sent to Tripolitania to combat the Italians who had invaded the province in 1911. Fighting European aggression was to remain one of the main tasks of the organisation throughout the war, though the TM also took part in the containment of internal dissident movements of mainly Arab separatist orientation, which were seen as a threat to the security of the Ottoman state.

The TM scored a limited success in Tripolitania; the Bedouin irregulars, provided by the Sanusiya, armed and led by Ottoman officers, managed to halt the Italian advance into the interior. By the time the Ottoman Empire was forced to make peace with Italy in 1912, on the outbreak of the first Balkan war, the invaders had not managed to advance much from their string of strongholds along the coast of the Mediterranean.

Two lessons were drawn from this campaign, both of which would have a detrimental effect on the Ottoman effort during the First World War: an inflated belief in the appeal and the power of Pan-Islam and equally exaggerated expectations from the use of irregular forces with little training or discipline. The TM continued with guerrilla tactics learned in Tripolitania and the Balkan wars by setting up *çetes* (guerrilla bands) in the First World War. The government was not scrupulous about recruitment for the *çetes*: several documents refer to convicted criminals having their sentences annulled to be sent to the *çetes*.<sup>70</sup> This practise was based on the claim that the criminal was able to "wash his sins away" by joining *cihad-i ekber*, the holy war against the enemies of Islam proclaimed on November 14, 1914. Yet the Ottoman leadership was not so naive as to believe that these factors alone could terminate British, French or Russian colonial rule in the areas subjected to TM subversion and propaganda. Rather, the irregulars were supposed to bind enemy troops in the colonies, thus giving the Ottoman Empire much needed time for military preparations.<sup>71</sup>

Enver Paşa decided to enlarge and consolidate the TM during the war years, out of the conviction that it represented an efficient tool to preserve Ottoman internal and external security. Arab nationalists brandished the TM as a "fiendish CUP plot to curb Arab liberty and freedom" because of its role it had played in the arrest of Arab notables subsequently hanged by Cemal Paşa in late 1915 and early 1916. The TM was the main instrument used against Arab separatism and not loath to use violent means to prevent any "treason."<sup>72</sup>

Leading members of the TM included Enver Paşa, his brother Nuri Bey, 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri, Ali Fethi Bey (Okyar), Turkish prime minister 1924 - 25,

<sup>69</sup> Hiçyılmaz, Ergün: *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa ve Casusluk Örgütleri*. 2.ed. İstanbul 1996, 48.

<sup>70</sup> Başbakanlık Arsivi İstanbul (henceforth BAI), DH-SFR, D. 47, V. 346, 1333.M.18, EUM - Adana Vilayet.

<sup>71</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 18.

<sup>72</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 50.

Enver's uncle Halil (the victor of Kut al-Amara in 1916), Colonel Mustafa Bey (Atatürk) and Major Süleyman Asakari Bey (first field director of the TM in the Great War). Other prominent members included Ömer Naci (co-founder of the CUP in Paris), Dr. Bahaettin Shakir (co-founder of the CUP and later director of the political bureau of the TM), Esat Shukayr Bey (mufti of the 4th army), Hilmi Musallimi (the private secretary of Grand Vizier Said Halim Paşa) and Ismail Canbulat Bey (from 1917 onwards minister of the interior).<sup>73</sup> Prominent North Africans were also on its payroll: from Algeria Muhammad 'Abd al-Karim Khattabi, 'Amir 'Ali, son of the famous 'Abd al-Qadir, from Morocco Hoca Abbas, head of the Tijaniyya, and from Tunisia 'Ali Bash Hamba, Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi and Sharif Bourgouiba, the father of Tunisia's first president after independence. Its representative in Libya was Shaykh Ahmad al-Sharif al-Sanusi, head of the Sanusiya brotherhood. It had 500 - 600 members in Egypt, and included Amir Ibn Rashid of the Shammar in Arabia.<sup>74</sup>

From this impressive body of members two characteristics of the TM are apparent: the organisation had excellent connections for gathering information within the Ottoman government (e.g. Hilmi Musallimi could certainly deliver interesting information about Said Halim Paşa, who was suspected of double-dealing with the British); and the TM had both military and civilian members. This probably gave the organisation the capability to remain highly secret. During an enquiry of Ottoman war crimes staged by the Entente powers after the war even prominent members of the Ottoman elite could not give detailed accounts of its activities.<sup>75</sup>

Within the framework of intelligence and propaganda activities three TM members deserve special attention: Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi, shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish and Eşref Kuşubaşı. The two shaykhs were prominently engaged in Pan-Islamic propaganda. Shaykh Salih also worked for the IOFe, while shaykh Shawish contributed numerous leaflets, brochures and books for the German propaganda effort. In all likelihood neither Oppenheim nor his peers were aware of the TM membership of the two shaykhs. If so, Enver Paşa probably used them to exercise a limited means of control on German propaganda. It is also almost certain that the "far-spread, efficient and secret Ottoman political intelligence service, whose field of operations included Central Asia" described by colonel Nicolai was the TM.<sup>76</sup>

Eşref Kuşubaşı was a long-serving field director of the TM during the war; he also was one of the main sources for Stoddard's study (he died only in 1964 aged 91). He had an interesting and chequered career during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, was an aloof and highly intelligent individual,

<sup>73</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 175ff.

<sup>74</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 58 - 59.

<sup>75</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 46.

<sup>76</sup> Nicolai, *Geheime Mächte*, 94.

who always maintained his distance from those in power, and judged the individuals and operations of the TM with remarkable objectivity.

Eşref Bey was born in Istanbul in 1873, son of a Circassian father and a Turkish mother. His Circassian descent led him to favour decentralisation and autonomy for ethnic and religious minorities, but his concern with Ottoman internal and external security eventually made him a staunch supporter of CUP centralisation and a fighter against sedition. Kuşçubaşı had opposed Sultan Abdülhamid II's regime from an early age, earning his first banishment to Edirne (three years) for "organised rebellion" while a student in the Kuleli Military Lycée. After graduation he entered the war college (Mekteb-i Harbiye), which he finished in 1898. While on duty in Macedonia Kuşçubaşı became politically active again, and was banished to the Hijaz, together with his father and his brother Selim Sami. In 1903 Eşref Bey escaped from internment in Medina and founded a guerilla movement together with his brother, another Circassian, Çerkes Tahir, and a local Arab, Faraj ibn al-Masri. Ironically this movement led by Eşref Bey, who was to be so prominently involved with crushing Arab aspirations, was called the "Arab Revolutionary Committee." It operated in the Medina area from early 1903 onwards, but failed to unite local Arab chiefs in a struggle against the Sultan, the "common enemy." Some raids against Ottoman regular troops were carried out with surprising ease, thus serving the aim to demonstrate the inefficiency and corruption of Abdülhamid's regime; in a bold stroke Eşref Bey managed to kidnap Mustafa Vasif Bey, aide-de-camp of the Sultan and son of the commander of Medina, Şükrü Paşa. Eventually Abdülhamid attempted to remove the threat by offers of money and an amnesty.

Although Eşref Bey and some of his fellows were Circassians, most TM members acting within the Empire during the war were Turks, especially in the higher ranks, for Enver mistrusted the loyalty of non-Turks. At its peak the organisation had over 30,000 men formed into several tactical and operational units. These men were recruited both from the armed forces and from the liberal professions (doctors, engineers, journalists, CUP politicians) and included a number of guerrilla warfare experts of "dubious backgrounds but unquestionable loyalty."<sup>77</sup>

Besides maintaining Ottoman national security, the TM also organised guerrilla warfare, both with volunteers and the *çetes*. The importance of the TM as a force loyal to Enver Paşa increased considerably after the proclamation of Holy War in November 1914. Regardless of what the triumvirate expected from the proclamation it reopened a rift within the CUP between convinced secularists and Islamists. The Islamists used the proclamation to increase their power within the CUP; the secularists were, at least during the first two years of the war, forced to remain silent as the *jihad* was still regarded as an important

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<sup>77</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 57.

military weapon. Enver used the TM to preserve loyalty to himself in the armed forces until the religious faction was all but shattered during the party conference of the CUP in 1916.<sup>78</sup>

The organisation gradually assumed a leading role in combating enemy espionage and general collaboration with the Entente powers. Ottoman internal security measures became gradually harsher during the later war years; this contributed prominently to the gradual disenchantment of growing sections of the Ottoman population with the CUP government. CUP policy towards non-Muslim minorities, suspected of sympathising with the enemy, became increasingly repressive, as the Ottoman government was disappointed with the results of the policy of appeasement towards non-Muslim adopted after the outbreak of war. At that time the CUP had suspended centralising and Turkifying measures and attempted to foster Pan-Islamic solidarity within the Empire. The resignation of Grand Vizier Sa'id Halim Paşa had not been accepted as he was a famous Pan-Islamic figure. Also, plans had been made to replace resigning ministers (ministers of post, Oskan Efendi, agriculture, Sulayman al-Bustani, and of finance, Cavit Bey) with Muslim Arabs "in order to tie Syria and Arabia more firmly to Istanbul."<sup>79</sup>

In the belief that these policies had failed their aim, the authorities and the state media deliberately created a spy scare in the course of 1915. This allowed the government to tighten the reigns, clamp down on its enemies and still to appear as the disinterested defender of Ottoman national integrity and security. At the height of this campaign Enver Paşa issued a directive on 31 December, 1915. It stated that "papers had been found proving the excessive level of enemy espionage - against which now decisive steps will be taken. Naval and army officers are instructed to maintain silence about any crucial information, as well as all civil officials. Those violating this directive are liable to suffer severe punishment." Point 3 of the directive ordered the expulsion all non-Muslims from civil or military service within 24 hours after receipt of the instruction, however necessary their work had been. The individuals in question were to be sent to non-sensitive areas, but by no means to Istanbul.<sup>80</sup>

The Germans were quite impressed with the work of the Ottoman security organisations. Colonel Nicolai depicted the Turkish police as skilful and energetic, which he ascribed to its having been schooled by political intrigues. Although the colonel noted that there was bureaucratic confusion (the Ottoman "Sureté Générale" and the Istanbul prefect of police had almost no mutual

<sup>78</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 44. In this conference the secularist faction, led by Ziya Gökalp, managed to force the Islamists to acquiesce in the introduction of an all-secular legal system; this was carried out in spite of German resistance, which originated with the fear that such a reform could diminish the validity of the proclamation of jihad and Pan-Islamic propaganda in general.

<sup>79</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V. 4, 03.11.14.

<sup>80</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V. 20, 31.12.15.

communications)<sup>81</sup> the Ottoman security organs appear to have worked with great efficiency. Enemy agents were arrested in such numbers that their trials often were subject to long delays. Punishment for espionage was severe (the law was modelled on a proposal previously rejected by the German parliament as too strict). As is common in war-time, a given paranoia seems to have befallen the Ottoman security organs; the great number of suspects and the lamentable condition of the prisons (many of them infested with spotted typhus) "certainly led to the deaths of some innocents"; this must have estranged minority populations even further from the Ottoman government. While such directives gradually managed to establish a reliable administration loyal to the CUP, the TM was used to hunt down enemies of the state and to curtail treacherous activities.<sup>82</sup> Zürcher also suggests that the TM played a considerable role in the Armenian massacres.<sup>83</sup>

The organisation also had an important task in sending envoys to the Muslim Entente colonies and to establish communications with revolutionary movements in these areas. Enver Paşa announced that "we will strike England where it hurts by causing the whole world of Islam to rise up in arms. We will send our most resourceful men to bring this about, men who will work with the patience and perseverance of Jesuit priests...These rebellions will play an important role in the World War toward the destruction of the Entente powers...."<sup>84</sup> Its focus thus was both on the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim world in general. In fighting outside enemies the TM's task was to carry out sabotage operations and diversionary attacks, mostly as irregular units. TM instructors and commanders were assigned to lead bedouin *mülcahidin* (warriors fighting out of religious motives) during the first campaign against the Suez Canal and all sorts of volunteer units (Kurds, Circassians, Druzes, Laz tribesmen and Yemenis). TM members also represented a sizeable faction of the Mevlevi regiment.<sup>85</sup>

The Mevlevi regiment represented an attempt to create an efficient propaganda network within the Ottoman army. Enver Paşa wished to exploit the high prestige the order enjoyed in India in fighting against the Indian Muslim troops in Mesopotamia, and also to bolster the Islamic credentials of the Ottoman government. The regiment was formed in Istanbul by recruiting Mevlevi shaykhs and dervishes. Members of other dervish orders were permitted to join. All recruits were issued with the high dervish hat, the *sikke*. After solemn ceremonies the regiment marched from Istanbul to Konya, whence it was sent to Damascus. It remained with the IV Army for over three years. While the military value of the dervishes appears to have been small, they were

<sup>81</sup> Nicolai, *Geheime Mächte*, 93.

<sup>82</sup> Nicolai, *Geheime Mächte*, 94.

<sup>83</sup> Zürcher, Erik Jan: *Turkey: A Modern History*. London 1995, 121.

<sup>84</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 55.

<sup>85</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 57.

used to raise morale in ordinary Ottoman army units. Other dervish orders did not furnish army units, but smaller bodies and cells which were then posted to the Caucasus or Gallipoli. The dervish units were rather ubiquitous and represented on all fronts of the war; their propaganda value was reported to have been considerable.<sup>86</sup>

The TM started its operations against Egypt as early as September 1914. British reports stated that Sulayman al-Baruni was busy forming a revolutionary movement in the country and that Turkish officers at large in Egypt represented a great danger. At the end of the month armed Arabs illegally crossed the Egyptian frontier. Still the British did not believe that the Ottomans were seriously contemplating an attack on the Suez Canal, although they were certain that the Germans would find this most desirable. The British believed that these incidents were merely attempts by the Turks to pretend concurrence with German wishes in order to extract more political and material favours from the Germans. As the Turks gleefully observed after the war the British appeared to have been thoroughly unaware of the secret alliance between Germany and Turkey. This surprised the TM members considerably. Eşref Kuşçubaşı noted that they did not assume that their government would be able to keep a secret.<sup>87</sup>

TM missions were sent to Ibn Sa'ud and Iraq. The Ottoman government wished to get the support of Ibn Sa'ud, then probably the strongest military leader in the Arabian Peninsula. The governor of Basrah was informed that thirty-three secret emissaries, among them German officers, were en route for India, Afghanistan and Iran, and that a shipment of money and weapons was on the way on a German freighter.<sup>88</sup> Around the same time, the British ambassador in Istanbul reported that the Ottoman government and the Germans had begun a concerted Pan-Islamic propaganda campaign. Eşref Kuşçubaşı and the TM found the German line of propaganda more amusing than credible. It claimed that the German Emperor had converted to Islam (under the name of Hajj Muhammad Guillamo), and that Germany was fighting against Russia for the cause of Islam. Consequently the propaganda campaign failed to achieve its objectives: most of the "Muslim masses" did not know Germany, let alone its Emperor. The TM pursued a rather more practical course: 600 fedais (irregular volunteers) under the command of "an officer related to Enver Paşa" arrived in Aleppo, the first contingent of TM personnel to arrive in the Arab provinces. The commander in question was Enver Paşa's brother Nuri Bey, who later saw service in Tripolitania.<sup>89</sup>

The funding of the organisation had two sources, the "secret budget" of the ministry of war and direct shipments of gold from Germany. The total

<sup>86</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 70 – 73.

<sup>87</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 65.

<sup>88</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 67.

<sup>89</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 68.

amount expended on the TM was in the region of 4,000,000 Turkish gold liras.<sup>90</sup> Occasionally the Germans attempted to assume control of the organisation by threatening to withhold payments, and indeed must have gained a given leverage; paymaster in Palestine in 1917 - 1918 was Kress von Kressenstein.<sup>91</sup>

Stoddard derived a wealth of information from contemporary British diplomatic reports, and in one of these a tendency, which must have aided the TM efforts enormously, is observable. The British simply did not believe that the Turks could do anything on their own; they ascribed the spread of Pan-Islamic propaganda to German influence, which the Ottoman government was powerless to stop or even interfere with. Underrating of Ottoman cunning and initiative was probably the most costly error the British made throughout the war in the Middle East.

While such cunning and initiative indeed cost the British dearly during the first two years of the war they were aided, on the other hand, by the conflicting interests of the involved enemy parties. As the cases discussed in the next chapter will show, German attempts to create a unified front of the Ottomans, local nationalists and themselves failed ignominiously. Equally damaging was the fact that the Germans and the Ottomans were not able to augment their call to jihad with suitable armed force or deliveries of weapons, ammunition and money.

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<sup>90</sup> According to Eşref Kuşçubaşı, this translated into the sum of 60 - 80 000 000 US\$ (1963 value!). Quite contrary to the German intelligence services in the Ottoman Empire, the TM cannot have had much reason for complaint about under-funding.

<sup>91</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 59.



### **Chapter 3: Collecting and Using Intelligence - Case Studies of German and Ottoman Attempts to Promote Jihad**

#### **Introduction:**

German intelligence work in the Ottoman Empire was carried out mainly by the diplomatic corps and some volunteers. Ambassador Hans von Wangenheim (until late in 1915) was heavily involved in several missions, supported by a number of consuls.<sup>1</sup> Not all of them possessed the necessary skills to become efficient intelligence agents. Few of them understood Turkish or any other local language. Therefore they were, as a rule, only able to communicate with members of the local elites or with higher-ranking officers, on whose goodwill the German diplomat (or occasionally officer) depended heavily. An exemption to that rule was captain Hans Humann, the naval attaché at the German embassy in Istanbul and close friend of Enver Paşa (according to some reports even his milk-brother). Humann clearly realised the difficulties posed by the absence of accurate information about local conditions in the Ottoman Empire. To remedy this Humann sent out agents early in the war (such as the case of Dr. Hoffmann treated below).<sup>2</sup>

Intelligence work and propaganda often were closely intertwined. The objective of many intelligence missions was to furnish the German and Ottoman authorities with suitable propaganda issues and material. Yet German agents in the Ottoman Empire often ran into trouble with Ottoman suspicions, both of a religious and a political nature. The Ottomans were frequently unwilling to have infidels at large in areas where Muslim sensitivities were easily offended. If uncovered, German agents to the Hijaz disguised as Muslims carried the risk of compromising the Ottoman government's recently reclaimed Islamic credentials. Political suspicions represented an even greater obstacle. The Ottoman government tried - and succeeded - to preserve its sovereignty and was unwilling to let Germans carry out fact-finding missions or propaganda. This unwillingness increased drastically where German and Ottoman interests clashed. The Germans tried to cooperate with nationalist committees and influential local leaders to achieve their objectives. The standard deal was German assistance to achieve national independence in the areas in question in exchange for assistance of the nationalists to incite their peoples to revolt against the colonial powers. Yet often, as in the case of Egypt, Iran and Tripolitania, the Ottomans aimed at (re-)conquering these territories and integrating them into the Ottoman Empire. Consequently they eyed the interaction between the nationalists and the Germans with suspicion and often put great obstacles in the way of German intelligence operations if they believed

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<sup>1</sup> see Morgenthau, Henry: *Secrets of the Bosphorus*. New York 1916, 23ff.

<sup>2</sup> Haley, *The Desperate Ottoman*, 40.

that the aim of these operations was contrary to Ottoman interests. More than any other field that of intelligence and propaganda operations demonstrated that the German-Ottoman alliance was definitely no "Entente cordiale" (see the cases of intelligence operations in Egypt and Libya).

Finally, intelligence operations within and without the Ottoman Empire often were rendered next to useless due to the insufficient means of the agents to communicate with their employers (as radio communication did not yet exist). This problem affected German as well as British intelligence operations (see the mission of Gumpenberg and the NILI-spies).

### A Fact-finding Mission - Dr. Hoffmann:

On 30 September, 1914, Humann instructed the German physician Dr. Hoffmann to undertake a journey to Syria and Palestine in order to win the support of the local German population in Palestine for German-Turkish policy and to win over the Arab press. He also was to report his observations to Humann. Funding for his journey was not to come from the German authorities, but from resident "Germans willing to make a sacrifice" in the Arab provinces.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Hoffmann travelled to Beirut and found the situation there worrying. The Christian newspapers regularly published news about Entente victories. To prevent reoccurrence the *vali* had threatened their editors with suspension of their papers unless they confined their coverage to news from the government-owned "Agence Ottomane." The only exemption was the Jesuit newspaper *Butir*, which traditionally advocated a hostile position towards France (where the order faced persecution). Dr. Hoffmann's next port of call was Aleppo, whence he reported on 7 October, 1914. Here the problem was a lack of media. The main newspaper, with a weekly print run of about 500 copies, was owned by a pro-French Catholic Christian. Everywhere in Bilad al-Sham newspapers as means of propaganda were deficient, and so were the political orientations of their owners. Enemy sources were frequently consulted. The local population also had been offended by harsh and rapacious methods the Ottoman troops had used while carrying out requisitions. While the doctor generally recognised the necessity of requisitions he was appalled at some extreme cases: "Even for the liberal-minded ladies' shoes and fancy underwear do not represent important war materials", he wrote commenting on Kurdish officers in Aleppo, who had requisitioned these items. The officers also had used up plenty of precious fuel on joyrides with their girl-friends.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Hoffmann summed up the results of his journey neatly by pointing out that local attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire or the war were not influenced by political or ideological, but by economic considerations. The

<sup>3</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V. 664, 30.09.1914.

<sup>4</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V. 664, Dr. Hoffmann to Humann from Damascus, 20.11.1914.

experiences of other German intelligence agents in the Ottoman Empire and Libya, as well as German experiences when trying to cooperate with Egyptian or Iranian nationalists were to bear this out. Often local leaders in all areas targeted by German and Ottoman *jihad*-propaganda adopted a neutral stance during the entire course of the war. Only in some cases, such as Iran or Tripolitania, could the Germans and Ottomans briefly offer greater rewards for participation in the *jihad* than could the British for the preservation of the local leaders' neutrality.

### The Battles for Egypt and Tripolitania

In Libya and Egypt the Germans and Ottomans attempted to create rebellions against the colonial powers by more muscular means than only by propaganda. Conquering Egypt was one of the few war aims the Germans and the Ottomans shared wholeheartedly. In the campaigns against Egypt (with which German and Ottoman operations in Libya and the Sudan were closely related) intelligence mainly meant collecting information how best to stir up the Egyptian and Libyan population to join the *jihad*. Although some successes were scored in Libya, the scheme ultimately came to naught. The Germans never found out, or allowed themselves to believe, that the conflict of interest between the parties involved - Germans, Ottomans, the Khedive, the Sanusiya and the Egyptian nationalists - doomed all schemes to produce a *jihad* and popular rebellion in Egypt to failure.

Libya was an easy target for the Ottomans as the Italians had never overcome local opposition. While Britain had achieved the conquest of Egypt after a very brief and almost bloodless campaign, Italy found herself bogged down in a guerrilla war after its invasion of Libya in 1911.<sup>5</sup> The Sanusiya, supported with smuggled Ottoman war materials and officers, proved a match for the numerically and technically superior Italian army. By 1914, after a brief period of comparative successes during 1912 and 1913, Italian control had again been restricted to the littoral of the Mediterranean.

From a purely military and economic point of view the CUP government had reason to feel more relief than grief at the loss of Tripolitania to the Italians. After all, this rid the Ottoman Empire of the responsibility to administer and defend this remote territory. Yet the loss of this Islamic territory harmed the Islamic credentials of the Young Turk leadership. Most of the territories hitherto lost to the Great Powers (or to independence) had been predominantly Christian, and the blame for the loss of the Muslim territories (e.g. Egypt and Tunisia) fell on Abdülhamid II, and not on the CUP. It had been extremely embarrassing for the CUP to abandon Tripolitania due to the outbreak of the first Balkan war, as

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, Lisa: "Nationalist Sentiment in Libya", in Khalidi, Origins of Arab Nationalism, 226.

the Young Turks had previously boasted that they would be able to defend all Muslim territories belonging to the Empire.

Therefore both Germany and the Ottoman Empire pursued the re-conquest of Tripolitania, and particularly of Egypt, vigorously. Neither the Germans nor the Ottomans believed that a military campaign against Egypt could achieve the re-conquest of the country. The plan could only succeed if the military invasion coincided with a popular rebellion in Egypt, which was to be prepared by an intensive propaganda campaign. In that case the British would be caught between two fronts and their defeat might be possible.

A third front was to be opened by persuading the Sanusiya to attack Egypt from the west. During 1911 Enver Paşa and other Ottoman officers had made good experiences with irregulars against a numerically and technically superior enemy. They also had observed the usefulness of propaganda, especially the proclamation of *jihad* issued by the leader of the Sanusiya, Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif, for fostering the will of the Tripolitanians to fight. The Italians credited Enver Paşa with the idea of proclaiming a *jihad*;<sup>6</sup> other sources claim that it originated with the Libyan notable and Ottoman deputy Farhat Bey al-Zawi.<sup>7</sup> The proclamation was received enthusiastically by the Libyans and appeared to have greatly bolstered their resolve to fight the Italians to the end. This success probably convinced the flamboyant Enver of the appeal of such proclamations to Muslims. He decided to use propaganda in the campaign against Egypt, too.

Control of Egypt and the Suez Canal was a vital interest for the British Empire as a line of communications with India, the Far East and Australia, as Bismarck had already observed.<sup>8</sup> The Germans regarded Egypt as the one point where the British Empire could be mortally wounded:

“England can be attacked and mortally wounded by land from Europe only in one place - Egypt. The loss of Egypt would mean for England not only the end of her dominion over the Suez Canal, and of her connexions with the Far East and India, but would probably entail also the loss of her possessions in Central and East Africa. The conquest of Egypt by a Mahommedan Power, like Turkey, would also imperil England's hold over her sixty million Mohammedan subjects in India besides being to her prejudice in Afghanistan and Persia.”<sup>9</sup>

It was thus not the invasion of Britain, which le Queux and Bottomley had so greatly feared, but that of Egypt, which the Germans pursued with a

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, *Nationalist Sentiment in Libya*, 229.

<sup>7</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Lewin, *The German Road to the East*, 60.

<sup>9</sup> Lewin, *The German Road to the East*, 61.

vengeance from 1914 onwards. A campaign against the Suez Canal was one of three military operations the Ottomans promised to undertake after their entry into the war. Its success depended on three factors: first, preparation of the Egyptian populace through propaganda; second, overcoming the geographical obstacles for the advancing army, and third, maintaining a united front consisting of all interested parties - the Germans, the Ottomans, the Khedive and the Egyptian nationalists. The last factor was the most difficult of all. Germany wished to damage Britain strategically and morally in the eyes of her Muslim subjects. The Ottomans desired to re-conquer Egypt and make it again an Ottoman province (without its previous semi-independent status). The Khedive wished to regain his throne and become an independent monarch, and the Egyptian nationalists aspired to complete independence for Egypt, with or without the Khedive. The moderates among them were prepared to accept nominal Ottoman suzerainty over the country, thus re-establishing the status quo ante 1882. The Germans, blissfully unaware of the deeply ingrained suspicions between the Ottomans, the Khedive and the Egyptian nationalists, mistakenly believed they could bring these three parties to cooperate harmoniously.

The situation in Libya was equally difficult; here the Germans overrated the Pan-Islamic appeal of the Ottoman proclamation of *jihad* and the Ottoman sultan's prestige as caliph. As in Egypt there were strong differences of interest between local leaders and the Ottomans. The Sanusiya was interested in independence and had no wish to exchange Italian for Ottoman control of Libya; also it bore little grudge towards the British. Then there was the problem of the strong German interest in the preservation of Italian neutrality. Through the alliance with Germany the Ottoman Empire was now also an ally of Italy, the undecided question of Tripolitania notwithstanding.<sup>10</sup> To keep Italy neutral the Germans endeavoured to make peace between the Sanusiya and the Italians, and direct the aggression of the Sanusiya instead against the British in Egypt. The Ottoman government gave lukewarm support to this idea; in contrast to Germany or Austria-Hungary it was hardly bothered by Italy's neutrality or belligerency.<sup>11</sup>

While the Germans and, to a lesser extent, the Ottomans thus overlooked the political difficulties for the Egyptian campaign the geographic obstacles were plain for all to see. The invading Ottoman force would have to march across 300 miles of almost entirely barren desert between the railway terminus at Bir Sab'a in Palestine and the Suez Canal. This greatly limited the possible number of soldiers to participate in the campaign and rendered the transport of heavy ordnance impossible. On these grounds General Liman von Sanders opposed the idea outright. Yet both the German general staff and Foreign Office believed a campaign against Egypt to be extremely desirable and therefore, in

<sup>10</sup> Cemal Paşa, *Erinnerungen*, 116.

<sup>11</sup> See PAFO, File R21126, AZ A33012, Rome, 18.11.14, Flotow to Foreign Office; File R21126, AZ A35495, Berlin, 20.12.14, Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

an act of wishful thinking, feasible. Liman's objections were overruled and the general instructed to proceed with the preparations.<sup>12</sup> Enver was an enthusiastic supporter; he hoped to gain military glory and to court Muslim opinion, both within the Empire and outside its boundaries.

Preparations meant the assembling of troops and equipment in Palestine, the discovery of a suitable march route and the clearing of the Sinai Peninsula, on paper belonging to Egypt, of enemy forces. Also the Sinai bedouin would have to be won over to the Ottoman side. The extreme aridity of the peninsula rendered the campaign feasible only during the winter months. Professor B. Moritz, the former director of the Khedivial Library in Cairo, was sent to Sinai in order to find the most suitable route. He recommended the central route right through the desert via Al-Nakhl.<sup>13</sup>

The concentration of forces in Palestine proved to be a cumbersome and difficult affair. Zeki Paşa, then commander of the 4th army in Damascus, had received the necessary orders as early as August 2, 1914, but only after the task had devolved upon colonel Cemal Bey, former commander of the VIII Army, had the preparations made some progress. At the same time the Bavarian lieutenant-colonel Friedrich Kress von Kressenstein became Cemal's chief-of-staff.<sup>14</sup>

In November 1914 Cemal Paşa became commander of the IV Army and Syrian governor-general. His plans were ambitious. In his farewell-speech from Istanbul he stated:

"I am fully aware of the greatness and of the difficulties of my task. If our endeavours fail, if my corpse and those of the brave men who accompanied me will remain on the shores of the canal, the friends of the fatherland will have to march over us in order to liberate Egypt, which is by rights the property of Islam, from the hands of the British usurpers."<sup>15</sup>

Transport for troops and supplies posed the greatest difficulties, as Major Karl von Laffert, Liman's attaché, correctly pointed out. Considering the apparent impossibility to acquire the necessary number of pack animals Laffert proposed the extension of the railway from Bir Sab'a to the Canal. The German authorities rejected this sound proposal on grounds of cost. Liman appeared to bear out this thrifty attitude; after his rebuff by the general staff and the Foreign Office Liman had undergone a radical mood-swing and estimated the necessary

<sup>12</sup> Wallach, Jehuda L.: *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe*. Düsseldorf 1976, 192.

<sup>13</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A20493, Berlin, 26.08.14: Moritz to Wangenheim.

<sup>14</sup> Cemal Bey was also known as "Küçük Cemal", little Cemal, in order to distinguish him from "Büyük", the "big" Cemal Paşa (governor-general of Syria and commander of the IV Army).

<sup>15</sup> Cemal Paşa, *Erinnerungen*, 144

funds as a modest 100,000 Turkish pounds,<sup>16</sup> which the German treasury guaranteed with the proviso that the sum was under no circumstances to be exceeded.<sup>17</sup> Eventually Cemal Paşa managed to acquire a sufficient number of camels. They were either purchased or requisitioned from the camel traders of Damascus, Sharif Husayn of Mecca and even 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud.<sup>18</sup> The expeditionary force was to consist of about 25,000 men, 15,000 pack animals and eight German and one Austrian battery as artillery support. Due to the scarcity of water half the force was to set out one day before the other. Two columns of TM irregulars under the command of Eşref Kuşçubaşı and Major Mümtaz Bey cleared the Sinai Peninsula of enemy detachments during the final months of 1914. Both Al-Arish and Al-Nakhl were occupied and fortified.

The expeditionary force left Bir Sab'a on January 14/15, 1915 and arrived at the Canal on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February. An attempt was made to cross it during the night. About 600 men reached the opposite shore, but they were unable to erect a bridgehead due to strong British resistance. Shortage of food and water, and the impossibility to create fortifications in the soft sand, forced the retreat of the Ottoman forces to Bir Sab'a which they reached by mid-February 1915, with a loss of 192 dead, 381 wounded and 727 missing.<sup>19</sup>

The campaign had been accompanied by sabotage operations in Egypt which were first carried out in early January 1915. They started promisingly. Two Austrian volunteers, Georg Gondos, who had previously worked at the oil wells in Gernsah oilfield (in the gulf of Suez), and Dr. Micha Paul Simon, set out across the Sinai desert accompanied by an Ottoman irregular force provided by Eşref Kuşçubaşı of the TM. With this small force the two Austrians achieved admirable feats. They laid siege to Al-Tur, managed to expel the British occupation force and captured great booty. Before returning to 'Aqaba, they reached Gernsah oilfield and blew up three of the wells. Gondos and Simon arrived in Jerusalem on February 24, 1915 and received a hero's welcome.

Their achievements probably lifted the somewhat depressed spirits of the German and Ottoman commanders after the unsuccessful first campaign against the Suez Canal. The two volunteers were recommended for Ottoman, Austrian and German decorations by Kress who noted that Gondos' deeds had shown "what a tough, determined and resourceful man can achieve even in the face of great hardship."<sup>20</sup> Yet this great praise led to an unexpected Ottoman reaction. Ottoman officers in Palestine were greatly piqued that an Austrian volunteer

<sup>16</sup> This sum was not so meagre once the exchange rate of the Turkish pound is considered. One Turkish lira was exchanged for 18 - 20 German Reichsmark, so the total sum was 2,000,000 Reichsmark.

<sup>17</sup> Weber, Frank G.: *Eagles on the Crescent: Germany, Austria and the Diplomacy of the Turkish Alliance 1914 - 1918*. Ithaca, London 1970, 92 - 94.

<sup>18</sup> Cemal Paşa, *Erinnerungen*, 157.

<sup>19</sup> Cemal Paşa, *Erinnerungen*, 166. See also Wallach, *Militärhilfe*, 193.

<sup>20</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/17, zu Res.No.216, Jerusalem, 25.02.1915: Kress to Liman von Sanders.

was praised for his successful undertakings when they had failed to achieve their objectives. Such wounded pride led them to accuse Gondos of simply inventing his story and faking the photographs he had produced as evidence for the success of his mission.<sup>21</sup> Kress had no option than to set up a board of enquiry, consisting of German and Ottoman officers, to investigate Gondos' claims. The matter was highly delicate. Who was to punish Gondos if he were proved guilty? For the sake of the German-Austro-Hungarian-Ottoman alliance it was almost inevitable that Gondos should be dealt with by an Ottoman military court. Yet Kress was fully aware that this might create a case of precedence with far-ranking implications. He noted that "it would be the first case of a foreigner being sentenced by a Turkish military court." Kress also knew that Cemal Paşa's irascible nature might well render the question academic. The Syrian governor-general could well be expected to have Gondos sentenced by an Ottoman military court regardless of German and Austrian misgivings.<sup>22</sup> The disrupting effect on the alliance of such an act could have been severe. Yet the board of enquiry completely exonerated Gondos on April 20, 1915, thereby closing the matter to general satisfaction.<sup>23</sup> Although the enquiry also unearthed the misdeeds of some Ottoman officers Kress decided not to press for their punishment. Gondos' honour was re-established, and any further stirring up of hostile emotions could only lead to further trouble. Nevertheless the affair had shown how strained German-Austrian-Ottoman relations occasionally were even at this early time of the war.<sup>24</sup>

### **The First Suez Canal Campaign - Analysis:**

Ottoman and German estimations of the positive and negative results of the campaign after the return of the expeditionary force differed greatly. The basic question was the general feasibility of a successful campaign against Egypt. The Ottomans quickly and rather euphemistically described the campaign as a "reconnaissance in force" which, given the size of the force and the strain it had imposed on scant military resources, did not sound entirely convincing. Intelligence about the British defences in the Canal Zone could much more cheaply have been obtained by a small, mobile force or skilled individual agents.

Yet the statement elegantly circumvented the realisation that an outright military conquest of Egypt by an Ottoman force (which had, after all, been the initial objective) was impossible. The reason for this impossibility was the

<sup>21</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/17, zu Res.No.216, Istanbul, 15.04.1915: Pomiankowski to Austrian Ministry of War.

<sup>22</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/17, zu Res.No.231, Jerusalem, 12.04.1915: Kress to Pomiankowski.

<sup>23</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/17, zu Res.No.333, Ibni, 20.04.1915: Kress "to all German officers in the Ottoman IV Army."

<sup>24</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/17, zu Res.No.333, Ibni, 28.04.1915: Kress to Pomiankowski.



difficulty of transporting and supplying a sufficiently large force and the necessary heavy ordnance.

As far as the British were concerned they were greatly impressed by the campaign, its eventual lack of success notwithstanding. Major-General Sir M.G.E. Bowman-Manifold noted:

"The Turkish achievement deserves respect. It was commendable to transport thousands of men, artillery and pontoons through 140 miles of desert; it was courageous to attack a front which was potentially defended by 70,000 troops and heavy naval artillery, and to retreat with all artillery and other war material having incurred less than 10% losses for the infantry was a clear victory and hardly gives the defenders any occasion to boast."<sup>25</sup>

General Bowman-Manifold's mentioning of a large British force to defend the Canal points to another success the Ottoman expedition might have achieved, namely to engage troops in Egypt who could not be sent to the Western Front. The Ottomans were quick to realise that this constituted success of some sorts. The argument was used to portray the expedition as a limited victory, not an embarrassing retreat which was potentially damaging to Ottoman public morale.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the military objectives the campaign appeared to have failed. Yet an even greater failure was that the Egyptians had failed to rebel as soon as the Ottoman expeditionary force arrived at the Canal. Neither the Germans nor the Ottomans had taken the trouble to find out how unlikely such a rebellion would have been, not only from practical, but also ideological reasons. Previous contacts with the Khedive and the Egyptian nationalists should have taught them otherwise. Yet the Germans and the Ottomans had ignored, and continued to ignore that local notables in Egypt and other areas occupied by the Entente powers were ultimately motivated to act - or not to act - by pragmatic and not ideological considerations. Even if German and Ottoman intelligence agents occasionally came remarkably close to point out this fact no attempt was made to incorporate it into German-Ottoman military-political planning in the Middle East.

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<sup>25</sup> Neulen, Hans Werner: *Feldgrau in Jerusalem. Das Levantekorps des kaiserlichen Deutschland*. Munich 1991, 69.

<sup>26</sup> WAV, File R47 - 1/10, Res.No.81, Istanbul, 11.02.1915: Pomiankowski to Austrian General Staff.

## Conflicting Interests I: Egypt - Germans, Ottomans and Egyptian Nationalists

The discrepancy of interests between all parties involved in the first Suez Canal campaign had made its success, particularly the creation of a rebellion in Egypt, doubtful even before the expeditionary force had set out. The only objective on which all parties unanimously agreed was to block or destroy the Canal and thus to deny the British its use.<sup>27</sup>

Local notables, both in Egypt and Libya, were interested in internal autonomy and the preservation of their power. The Egyptian Nationalist Party (*hizb al-watan*), founded by Mustafa Kamil, aimed both at Egyptian independence and a change of the social and political order of the country. The Germans had started negotiations with exiled nationalists in August 1914. With the help of these nationalists, the Germans and Ottomans hoped to bring their Pan-Islamic propaganda to flourish, eventually creating an uprising of the Egyptian populace against the British. The propaganda effort was expected to augment and even replace insufficient Ottoman military force. As the Germans believed that the loss of Egypt to the British would benefit the Central Powers greatly, the leader of the first German detachment to be sent to Istanbul was instructed to promote a campaign against Egypt with great vigour. Similar instructions were given to ambassador Wangenheim in Istanbul; he was to solicit the support of Khedive Abbas Hilmi and the Egyptian nationalists.<sup>28</sup>

Deposed and exiled, the Khedive desperately struggled to regain his throne by all available means. He fervently stressed the strong loyalty of the Egyptians for his person, which - he claimed - made him an indispensable party in the re-conquest of Egypt. There were, however, rivals for the rule of the country; a faction of anti-Khedivial Egyptian nationalists and Ottoman Grand Vizier Sa'id Halim Paşa, member of a branch of the vice-regal family, who claimed the Khedivate for himself. The bitter enmity between Abbas Hilmi and the Grand Vizier urged German Foreign Secretary von Jagow to impress on Wangenheim the absolute necessity of "the greatest discretion" in his negotiations with the Khedive. Jagow believed in Abbas Hilmi's usefulness to win Egyptian public opinion over to the German-Ottoman side. Therefore Wangenheim was instructed to correspond with the Khedive only by encrypted telegrams. Sa'id Halim was not to be informed of any such correspondence.<sup>29</sup>

Abbas Hilmi's freedom of action was restricted by British threats to seize his vast landholdings in Egypt, which represented his main source of income, if he were to commit hostile acts. The Khedive's consequent reluctance to show himself openly hostile to the British soon led the Germans and Ottomans to

<sup>27</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/10, Res.No.81: Constantinople, 11.02.15, report by Pomiankowski (Austrian-Hungarian Military Representative) to Austrian General Staff concerning Turkish operations against the Suez Canal.

<sup>28</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A13876, Berlin, 20.08.1914: v.Capelle to Foreign Office.

<sup>29</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A9875, Berlin, 22.08.1914: Jagow to Wangenheim.

suspect him of double-dealing; they also began to doubt his claim to be the "true leader of the Egyptian nation." Thus contacts were also made with exiled Egyptian nationalists, many of whom had been opponents of Abbas Hilmi before the war. When approached by the Germans they were more than ready to cooperate, as this served not only their political aims, but also offered escape from the financial straits most of these exiled nationalists found themselves in. In fact two of them, Mehmet Fahmi, a teacher at Geneva University since the outbreak of war, and Fahri Bey, who had been in exile since 1912, had already approached German consul-general Geissler in Geneva in late August 1914. Their plan was to stir up rebellion in Egypt and to block the Suez Canal by sinking vessels, for which they needed German financial support. In case the Germans refused, Fahmi and Fahri asked Geissler to put the matter before the Ottoman cabinet for evaluation.<sup>30</sup>

Before acting on the nationalists' proposal, the Germans sought the expertise of the Austrian Rudolf Slatin (Paşa) who had previously served as inspector-general of Sudan. He had resigned his post at the outbreak of war and returned to Vienna, where he offered his services to the German and Austrian governments. His proposals included propaganda activities in the Sudan and Egypt, stressing the great importance of a show of military force. In that case rebellions were likely to break out, thus bearing out the opinion of the Egyptian nationalists.<sup>31</sup> Slatin regarded Ottoman cooperation as essential, ruling out an all-German operation: "Some Turkish battalions at Suez would be very dangerous for the British, who had only 4,000 white troops in the country."

Blowing up the Canal with dynamite would have a severe impact on the British war effort. Slatin proposed to prepare the "black Muslim populace" in Upper Egypt and the Sudan immediately through propaganda agents; such propaganda could also be expected to yield good results in India. The British decision to confiscate the two battleships Turkey had ordered from British shipyards had greatly incensed Indian Muslim opinion, as "the ships were seen as a present of the Indian Muslims to the Caliph."<sup>32</sup>

For the time being the Khedive agreed to cooperate with the nationalists. Abbas Hilmi informed Wangenheim that he was prepared "to dare everything in order to terminate British rule in Egypt." He made no secret of his desperate situation and admitted that "only a German victory could save him now." He believed the prospects for rebellion to be good; the Egyptian people and 18,000 Egyptian troops were prepared to rise. Abbas Hilmi proposed to have the troops

<sup>30</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A20876, Geneva, 20.08.14: Geissler to Foreign Office (via Berne).

<sup>31</sup> PAFO, File R211234, AZ A20765, Vienna, 19.08.14: Tschirschky (Ambassador) to Foreign Office.

<sup>32</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A21045, Vienna, 22.08.14: Tschirschky to Foreign Office.

remove British officers forcefully and to replace them with Germans; the latter were to effect entry into the country via Al-Arish.<sup>33</sup>

The problem of a multitude of sources of information manifested itself for the Germans immediately. Each interested party attempted to convince them of their version of the "truth" to be the only one, and of the unreliability of its rivals. Slatin was attacked by an anonymous letter to Count Berchtold, Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, which quoted Slatin's cordial relations with the British as reason for suspicion.<sup>34</sup> The identity of the anonymous author was revealed when Abbas Hilmi warned the German ambassador not to trust Slatin, whom he described as "*un veritable gamin* (scoundrel)." The Khedive believed that the real motive for Slatin's return to Vienna might well be espionage for the British.<sup>35</sup>

The Germans meanwhile continued to prepare for the Egyptian campaign. At the end of August under-secretary of state Zimmermann drafted an agenda of the objectives of this campaign and the proposed means to achieve them. The native armies and Muslim populace in Egypt and the Sudan were to be prepared by propaganda agents, who should "fight enemy lies and spread news of our (German) victories," and also were to spread the news of the German-Ottoman alliance. Zimmermann believed strongly in the importance of the intervention of the Sultan-Caliph, even if only a small number of Ottoman troops could be despatched to the Suez Canal. Saboteurs were to target British officers, the Suez Canal and important public works and communication facilities. Abbas Hilmi was expected to assist the Ottomans to the best of his ability. As soon as the Ottoman expeditionary force had been assembled it was to be joined by German officers. Further German assistance to the campaign would consist of equipment and funds. In Zimmermann's words "the great potential value of the campaign necessitated its preparation without regard to cost or effort."<sup>36</sup>

Before Abbas Hilmi could assist the Ottomans the Germans first had to reconcile him with the Ottoman government. The Khedive was not only distrusted by Sa'id Halim, but also by Enver Paşa. Abbas Hilmi repeatedly tried to secure Wangenheim's support for his overtures to the Ottoman government by reminding the German ambassador of his great value as someone who commanded loyalty in Egypt and who was a reliable source of information. Indeed the Khedive's sources of information were impressively accurate. The British had either disarmed the native troops of the Egyptian army or sent them to Upper Egypt and the Sudan. The 3,000 Egyptian troops remaining in Lower Egypt were outnumbered by the 5,500-strong British occupation forces. Thus only the lightly armed "guards" in every Egyptian village could be expected to

<sup>33</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A19345, Tarabya, 22.08.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>34</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A20300, Vienna-Berlin, 21.08.14: Letter from Dr. Georg Guba to Minister of State in the Foreign Office Dr. Delbrück.

<sup>35</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A20493, Tarabya, 26.08.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>36</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A21398, Berlin, 25.08.14: Zimmermann to Wangenheim.

give armed support to the invading Ottoman army. On the positive side there were "several hundred thousands" of these village guards. There were also retired Egyptian officers, who were believed to be willing to lead a revolt if reinforced with Turkish (explicitly not European) officers. In the Khedive's opinion Ottoman cooperation in general and Enver's cooperation in particular was vital for success. However, the Ottoman minister of war had "not been favourably disposed" towards Abbas Hilmi in the past, an attitude which the Khedive hoped to change with Wangenheim's help.<sup>37</sup>

Enver was indeed suspicious of Abbas Hilmi; he had already told Wangenheim that he regarded the Khedive as "unreliable and merely a greedy man of business." Enver accused the Khedive of having accepted bribes from the Italians, and of having refused to give any support to the Ottoman officers in Libya during the Tripolitanian war. Enver also suspected the Khedive of collaboration with the British against the nationalist party until the British exiled him. These factors notwithstanding Enver accepted the necessity of securing the Khedive's cooperation, as this was "indispensable for our plans."<sup>38</sup>

From a German and Ottoman point of view, the available information about the situation in Egypt, mainly from Greek newspapers, looked promising. The papers described the atmosphere in Egypt as "explosive." Riots had broken out and forced the British to rush in reinforcements from India and Malta. There were rumours about British plans to blockade the Palestinian coast in order to prevent Ottoman troop transports from reaching Egypt.<sup>39</sup> The German ambassador in Athens, Baron von Quadt, reported these rumours to Berlin with the caveat that the information originated with some Egyptian sailors, whose information might have been exaggerated by the press. The British still appeared to take the situation in Egypt seriously enough to take preventive action by disarming native army units. It was also rumoured that there was turmoil in India; three high-ranking British officers had allegedly been murdered.<sup>40</sup>

Thwarting the Khedive's efforts to become the sole representative of Egyptian interests the Germans also adopted some proposals of the above mentioned Egyptian nationalists Mehmed Fahmy and Fahri Bey, who were then in exile in Switzerland. As they were threatened with immediate arrest should they return to Egypt the two nationalists had applied for and received permission to travel to Istanbul; Gamil 'Attar, one of Fahmy's students, was to serve as their representative in Cairo.<sup>41</sup> They had meanwhile been joined by Muhammad Farid Bey, the leader of the "Young Egyptian Movement" and

<sup>37</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A21231, Tarabya, 28.08.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>38</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A22034, Pera, 29.08.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>39</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A19938, Athens, 02.09.14: Quadt to Foreign Office.

<sup>40</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A21135, Athens, 05.09.14: Quadt to Foreign Office.

<sup>41</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A20987, Geneva, 23.08.14: Geissler to Foreign Office (via Berne).

successor of Mustafa Kamil as leader of the *hizb al-watan*, the Egyptian nationalist party. German ambassador in Berne Romberg promised to provide the travel expenses "unless otherwise instructed."<sup>42</sup> Fahri Bey hoped to be able to reconcile the Khedive with the previously hostile faction of the nationalist party in Istanbul.<sup>43</sup>

During his journey to Istanbul Farid met an old friend, Dr. Weigelt, in Budapest. Weigelt wrote to Wangenheim that he considered Farid to be a sincere and still influential Egyptian nationalist, who still had ample means to communicate with Egypt and had plans to block and, if possible, destroy the Suez Canal.<sup>44</sup> Yet Farid believed that eventual success was only possible with the total cooperation of the Khedive and the nationalists; furthermore weapons and ammunition in large quantities would have to be provided by the Germans.<sup>45</sup>

Muhammad Farid Bey had chosen a good time to put forward his request, as the situation on the Western Front looked ever bleaker for the Germans. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg instructed Wangenheim to exert diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman government to honour its treaty obligations by attacking Russia. Of equal importance was a campaign against Egypt with ample military force. In case the Ottomans agreed to undertake this operation the German ambassador was authorised to offer substantial deliveries of weapons, funds, and the services of some German officers to Enver Paşa.<sup>46</sup>

Enver agreed readily and met Wangenheim on September 7 for further discussions. Enver proposed to use tactics similar to those used in the 1911 Libyan war, namely guerrilla warfare and sabotage on a great scale. Small armed bands of some 12 - 15 members (*çetes*), each commanded by a Turkish or Egyptian officer, were to be formed in every Egyptian *mudiriyya* (district). The *çetes* were to carry out raids on smaller military posts, attacks on railway stations, telegraph posts and ships, and, if necessary, to assassinate British military or civilian personnel. After each attack the groups were to disperse, then to resurface in another location for renewed action. Hidden weapons were available in sufficient quantities.

Enver also intended to prepare the ground by sending propaganda leaflets into Egypt. He still believed the Khedive to be untrustworthy and recommended Wangenheim not to inform him of these plans; Abbas Hilmi's only use was as a

<sup>42</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A21098, Berne, 28.08.14: Romberg to Foreign Office.

<sup>43</sup> PAFO, File R21123, AZ A22068, Geneva, 28.08.14: Geissler to Foreign Office (via Berne).

<sup>44</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A22134, Constantinople, 07.09.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>45</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21910, Constantinople, 07.09.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>46</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A22400, Luxemburg, 07.09.14: Bethmann-Hollweg to Wangenheim.

figurehead for propaganda. This propaganda campaign was to be organised by Dr. Curt Prüfer of the German Foreign Office.<sup>47</sup>

While Ottoman cooperation was without doubt vital, the Germans still attempted to retain supreme command of the expedition. General Liman proposed to put Lieutenant-Colonel Back and Major Haak at the disposal of the commander of the expeditionary force, probably in order to have German representatives at the Ottoman headquarters.<sup>48</sup> The German lieutenant Mors and several Egyptian emissaries had already been ordered to smuggle explosives and propaganda material into Egypt via Alexandria.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately an attempt by a German pilot previously in the employ of the Suez Canal Company to block the canal by running a vessel aground at its narrowest stretch had already failed. The pilot, Mr. Brasch, had narrowly avoided British suspicion and capture as an enemy agent. Further attempts at blockade would therefore have to be made from Palestine and most likely not from inside Egypt.<sup>50</sup>

The Germans also proceeded to set up a propaganda network in Egypt. Their contact address in Egypt was a Greek lawyer, Dr. Nikola Anagnostopoulo, in Alexandria. He was to be sent propaganda material from Rome and was to publish it in the Arabic press, also to fabricate propaganda leaflets which were to be distributed secretly.<sup>51</sup> Yet propaganda, according to Muhammad Farid, could only be successful after Ottoman military assistance for the rebels was forthcoming. The apparent inability of the Egyptian nationalists to bring rebellions about single-handedly compelled Wangenheim to report to Berlin in disgust that the nationalists had "too little courage" and were "too little prepared to make sacrifices in order to do something on their own."<sup>52</sup> Liman had already sent Kress and a few more German to Damascus to assist in the preparation of the campaign. They were accompanied by Dr. Prüfer who was to organise an intelligence service and to carry out "political tasks."<sup>53</sup> In order to allow the growing number of German and Ottoman agents in Egypt to communicate with their employers, cover addresses in neutral countries were to be provided by ambassadors Flotow (Rome) and Quadt (Athens).<sup>54</sup>

In the meantime the exiled Egyptian nationalists had been joined by Dr. Muhammad Mansur Rifat of Geneva. Rifat volunteered to carry out propaganda in Egypt for the Germans and Ottomans. He had introduced himself to German

<sup>47</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21876, Constantinople, 07.09.1914: Prüfer/Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>48</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21125, Tarabya, 08.09.1914: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>49</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21135, Tarabya, 08.09.1914: Prüfer/Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>50</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21696, Beirut, 10.09.1914: von Grünau to Wangenheim.

<sup>51</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21976, Rome, 13.09.14: von Grünau to Foreign Office.

<sup>52</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21910, Tarabya, 14.09.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>53</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A23967, Tarabya, 20.09.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>54</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A25052, Athens, 05.10.1914: Quadt to Foreign Office; Rome, 06.10.1914: Flotow to Foreign Office.

ambassador Romberg in Berne as the "leader of the Egyptian Patriotic Club in Geneva and editor of the newspaper *"Patrie Egyptienne."*<sup>55</sup> With Romberg's recommendations Rifat set out for Berlin on September 27, 1914.<sup>56</sup>

In Berlin Rifat informed Zimmermann of his plans to travel to Istanbul. Two members of his "party", Ahmed Talaat and Isma'il Husni, were to go directly to Egypt via Italy. Zimmermann noted that Rifat, in spite of his previous hostility, seemed to have the sincere desire to cooperate with the Khedive and the Ottomans. Still he considered it necessary to obtain further information about Rifat. Oppenheim was instructed to obtain this from Shaykh Abd al-'Aziz Shawish and from Har Dayal.<sup>57</sup>

Another potential intelligence agent who approached the German authorities at the end of September 1914 was Carl Neufeld. He had been living in Egypt and the Sudan since 1879 and had spent over 12 years as prisoner of the Mahdists, who had forced him to convert to Islam and to marry a Sudanese wife. Neufeld had remained in the Sudan after its re-conquest by the British, and even become a British subject, but had been expelled as an enemy alien after the outbreak of war. The British were afraid of his good relations with local Muslim notables, which might have allowed him to "stir up trouble for them in Egypt and Sudan." These suspicions were not without reason; Neufeld set out for Germany via Italy and offered his services as "political agent in the Sudan" to the German consul-general in Naples.<sup>58</sup>

The increasing number of different sources of information and interested parties in the campaign made obvious the need for centralised leadership, which, according to Wangenheim, Enver Paşa had now assumed. The Egyptian nationalists were to be instructed not to undertake activities on their own before having consulted Enver.<sup>59</sup> Another problem lay in a lack of motivation of some designated agents to carry out their assigned tasks. Rifat's agents Ahmed Talaat and Isma'il Husni did not seem to be particularly enthusiastic about secret service work in Egypt and applied for permission to go to Istanbul instead. Cooperation with Rifat himself was anything but simple, as he was deeply suspicious of most other Egyptian nationalists and frequently tried to damage their reputation in the eyes of the Germans. Thus he accused Muhammad Fahmy of being an agent of the Khedive and unsuitable "for determined actions."<sup>60</sup>

While frequently at loggerheads with each other the Egyptian nationalists also often had strained relations with the CUP. Muhammad Fakhry, for

<sup>55</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21973, Berne, 12.09.14: Romberg to Foreign Office.

<sup>56</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A24316, Berlin, 29.09.14: von Oppenheim to Romberg.

<sup>57</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A25274, Berlin, 07.10.14: Zimmermann to von Oppenheim.

<sup>58</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A24446, Rome, 29.09.1914: Flotow to Foreign Office.

<sup>59</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A21135, Tarabya, 08.10.14: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>60</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A26866, Geneva, 13.10.14: Geissler to Foreign Office (via Berne).



instance, indicated to the Austrian ambassador in Athens his lack of esteem for the CUP; sole exemption was Enver Paşa, with whom Fakhry considered it possible to cooperate.<sup>61</sup> Relations between some Germans involved in the campaign were not much better: thus, without obvious reason, Professor Moritz believed Neufeld to be utterly unreliable when asked to give an estimate of the latter's character.<sup>62</sup>

Rifat eventually succeeded in discrediting his rivals. Wangenheim declared that Abd al-'Aziz Shawish and Har Dayal considered Rifat to be the most talented of the Egyptian nationalists. "The remainder of Egyptians here in Constantinople have so far proved a failure. It is undesirable to swell the ranks of unreliable elements even further."<sup>63</sup> It appears that the rather short-tempered Wangenheim already began to feel the strain of reconciling various political interests with each other, not only between Germans and Ottomans, but also between rival nationalists.

Wangenheim's advice was not heeded by the German authorities, who continued and even intensified their search for individuals with qualifications to become agents in the region. They managed to find plenty of volunteers, but previous experiences made them extremely suspicious as to the "reliability" of the prospective agents. While suspicion was sometimes justified, other individuals were rejected purely on grounds of snobbery, even if they possessed splendid qualifications and intimate knowledge of the region and its peoples.

One such example was the case of Mr. Sievers, a merchant with long work experience in the Sudan. He proposed to create bases for propaganda agents in either Jidda or Ma'an. Propaganda material received by telegraph then was to be transported by Arab agents to the African shore of the Red Sea. In Sievers' experience the Bisharin Arab tribesmen were particularly suited; he hoped to find messengers willing to travel to Aswan, Asiut and the Sudan in exchange for "generous remuneration." Propaganda was best carried out "from south to north;" it could be expected to have the best results in the southern parts of Egypt and would be well-nigh impossible for the British to check. The target group should be the "great masses," not the notables, who were "powerless to do anything for the cause." The most efficient way to influence the large mass would be the distribution of German news and pamphlets among the pilgrims in Mecca.<sup>64</sup>

Sievers's proposal was rejected by Oppenheim, who considered him to be unsuitable for the mission. Yet Sievers himself attributed Oppenheim's decision to quite a different reason; he complained to his intermediary, Professor Plenge, that Oppenheim had treated him in an arrogant, high-handed manner. The baron

<sup>61</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A26399, Athens, 15.10.15: Quadt to Foreign Office.

<sup>62</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A26481, Tarabya, 13.10.1914: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>63</sup> PAGFO, File R21125, AZ A26866, Tarabya, 12.10.1914: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>64</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A30593, Leipzig, Berlin, 15.10.1914: Sievers to Foreign Office (via Prof. Plenge and Dr. Jaekch).

had claimed that Sievers was unsuitable due to his lack of understanding of one of the dialects on the African shore of the Red Sea, which was well understood by several professors at the disposal of the Foreign Office.

Professor Plenge was outraged. In a stern letter to the Foreign Office he accused Oppenheim of having acted as a pure bureaucrat, without a talent to judge people. Professor Plenge's complaint about Oppenheim's high-handedness was more than well-founded. The affair was unfortunately not an isolated incident. The Germans frequently judged volunteers on grounds of their social standing, not their qualifications, as Oppenheim's comment on the Sievers incident shows; the latter "could not be used for our interests, for reasons of character and lack of language skills. I advised to reject his services with the greatest thanks for his patriotic spirit."<sup>65</sup> This attitude was to a considerable extent the reason for the eventual failure of the Pan-Islamic propaganda campaign. As professor Plenge summed up neatly:

"The stirring up of the Sudan and Egypt by German philologists is a total illusionist proposition, if these philologists do not also possess the talents of skilled negotiators. But Mr. von Oppenheim has only focussed on these dialects and has humiliated Sievers by stressing his inferior social position [Sievers apparently was a self-made man of rather low origins]..."<sup>66</sup>

Dr. Rifat was also not very enthusiastic about the reception he had been given by Oppenheim in Berlin; apparently the baron kept him waiting "for hours" before he granted him an interview.

Other volunteers were rejected out of more sound reasons. The scholar and geographer Hugo Grote had offered his services as a political agent for the Middle East and proposed to work in cooperation with Faik Paşa of the Ottoman IV Army. Kress did not regard his presence in the Middle East as essential or even desirable. He recommended to Grote to remain in Berlin and to put his services at the disposal of German Foreign Office. According to Kress the Ottoman authorities had far better contacts in Egypt and were able to maintain them in spite of tough British countermeasures. Mr. Schaeffer, a German officer who had volunteered for propaganda services in the Middle East was likewise rejected by Kress, who found it undesirable to have another propaganda agent in the region when Faik Paşa, Zeki Paşa (the former commander of the Ottoman IV Army) together with several local notables and Mümtaz Bey of the TM were already engaged in similar operations. Kress acted not out of snobbery, but understood the dangers of an overzealous conduct of propaganda: "If too many

<sup>65</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A32510, Berlin, 11.11.14: Oppenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>66</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A31422, Leipzig, 11.11.1914: Plenge to Jackh.

individuals are engaged in this task there is the serious risk of mutually counterproductive initiatives."<sup>67</sup>

Instead, Kress instructed the German agent Otto Mannesmann, who was then stirring up the Sanusiya in Libya, to extend his operations to Egypt. The aim was to prevent the enemy from concentrating all his forces for the defence of the canal. This was to be done "by creating riots in larger towns, derailing of trains, destruction of railways, telegraphs and telephones in as many places as possible, especially between Cairo and the Canal. Substantial sabotage operations were to be carried out in the Canal Zone, and ideally armed rebellion brought about. Attacks on the defenders from the rear would "render our task a lot easier."<sup>68</sup> Kress's letter shows that propaganda and covert action were regarded as highly important in the Egyptian campaign, but also that the Germans grossly overrated the appeal of such propaganda. These exaggerated expectations were largely the result of deficient intelligence operations, or of the unquestioned acceptance of some informers of suitably high social standing. The testimony of Egyptian Prince 'Aziz 'Ali, who informed German ambassador Flotow in Rome at the end of November that the Pan-Islamic efforts of the Ottoman Empire and Germany had greatly impressed the Egyptian notables and the leaders of the Sanusiya, was accepted as proof for the success of the Pan-Islamic propaganda effort.

This conviction was reinforced by the information Prince 'Aziz 'Ali gave Flotow about the situation in Libya. The prince stated that the Sanusiya was ready to attack Egypt from the west as soon as the Ottoman expeditionary force had set out on the march to the Suez Canal. Yet Sayyid Ahmad feared renewed Italian aggression once Libya was stripped of defenders. To allay these fears Flotow recommended diplomatic pressure on the Italians to abstain from military operations in Libya.<sup>69</sup> At that time German agents had already been active in Libya to achieve precisely that. While their efforts at first seemed to be quite successful they ultimately ended in failure.

## Conflicting Interests II: Libya - Germans, Ottomans, Italians and the Sanusiya

Until summer 1915, the German agents in Libya found themselves sitting between two chairs. On the one hand, the Germans and Austrians regarded the preservation of Italian neutrality as vital for the interests of the Central Powers. They therefore attempted to induce the Sanusiya and the Ottomans to leave the Italians in peace and to attack the British in Egypt instead. On the other hand, the Sanusiya and the Ottomans were not enthusiastic about these plans. The Sanusiya, first and foremost, wished to liberate Libya from Italian occupation, and had no quarrel with the British. The Ottomans expected the Germans to

<sup>67</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A30593, Damascus, 25.10.1914: Kress to Liman von Sanders.

<sup>68</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A.I.2675, Tarabya, 19.11.1914: Kress to Mannesmann.

<sup>69</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A33012, Rome, 11.11.1914, Flotow to Foreign Office.

furnish the Sanusiya and their own forces in Libya with weapons and funds. But in doing so they were almost certain to give rise to Italian suspicions that the *jihad* not only targeted Britain, France and Russia, but Italy's occupation forces in Libya as well. For almost a year the Germans struggled to preserve a precarious balance in Libya. Only Italy's entry into the war on the side of the Entente powers in summer 1915 put paid to any schemes to preserve Italian neutrality.

The British in Egypt had already embarked upon the strategy of "forward defence" in November 1914. As the Germans discovered the British had persuaded Sidi Muhammad al-Rida, the cousin of Sayyid Ahmad al-Sanusi, to travel to Jarabub, the "capital" of the Sanusiya, in order to discourage Sayyid Ahmad from his plans to march on Egypt. Sayyid Ahmad apparently did not need much convincing. As other sources indicated he had paid no heed to the stipulation that the *jihad* be only directed against the "enemies of Islam", read the Entente powers, and continued his guerrilla war against the Italians without any noticeable change. Also Sayyid Ahmad bore no grudge towards the British, who had allowed arms and Ottoman officers to pass through Egypt unhindered at the time of the Italian invasion in 1911.

Under such circumstances, repeated German and Ottoman assurances that the *jihad* was by no means a hostile act against Italy were unlikely to be accepted by the Italians. The efforts of Ottoman ambassador to Tripolitania, Nabi Bey, to disclaim that the Porte intended to stir up "Muslim fervour" and had no intention of stirring up Muslims against Christians were likewise doomed to failure.<sup>70</sup>

German and Ottoman operations in Libya assumed great importance after Grand Vizier Sa'id Halim Paşa put the cooperation between the Ottomans and the Egyptian nationalists in grave danger at the end of November 1914. Probably out of personal spite Sa'id Halim informed the Khedive to have no illusions as to the real aims behind the Ottoman campaigns for the re-conquest of Egypt. The Ottoman army would not come as disinterested liberators of Egypt from the British yoke, but to reintegrate the country into the Ottoman Empire as an ordinary province. Enraged the Khedive immediately dispatched his private envoy 'Ali Shamsi Bey to Egypt in order to dissuade the Egyptian population from giving any assistance to the invading Ottoman troops.<sup>71</sup>

The manifold delays in the preparation of the Egyptian campaign had also taken their toll. Ambassador Quadt reported that he "had received information that Enver Paşa was absolutely disillusioned. Most of those responsible for the operation have fallen out with each other."<sup>72</sup> At the beginning of 1915 the Egyptian nationalists had started to treat the delay of the campaign as deliberate procrastination on the part of the Ottoman and German governments. They had

<sup>70</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A33717, Berlin, 28.11.1914: Barth/Defior to Foreign Office.

<sup>71</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A32776, Rome, 29.11.1914: Flotow to German Foreign Office.

<sup>72</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A36291, Athens, 26.12.1914: Quadt to Foreign Office.

threatened Consul-General Geissler in Geneva with the withdrawal of their support if the campaign was not begun in the near future. Shamsi Bey, one of the trustees of Muhammad Fahmy and Muhammad Farid, told Geissler that his party was beginning to doubt the commitment of the Ottoman government to the common cause. If the Ottoman sultan hesitated further to call the Egyptians to arms against the British his party "and the Egyptian people" would be forced to ally themselves with the British, who would then have 100,000 white and 120,000 loyal coloured troops at their disposal.<sup>73</sup>

These alarming reports made it all the more important to secure the cooperation of the Sanusiya. This task was now assumed by the German general staff. Captain Nadolny, liaison officer between the Foreign Office and Section IIIb of the German general staff (responsible for espionage, propaganda and subversive actions in enemy and neutral territories) informed the Foreign Office that Marchese Garroni, the Italian ambassador in Istanbul, was reputed to be quite pro-German and would probably be able to obtain permission for the transfer of agents and propaganda material to Tripolitania from the Italian government.<sup>74</sup> The German military attaché in Istanbul was instructed to find a suitable personality, who "knows the eastern Sahara and speaks sufficient Arabic" to act as a go-between between the Germans and the Sanusiya. Nadolny proposed to send this agent by air from Palestine across Egypt.<sup>75</sup> Given the technical standards of the time, this would not only have been a remarkable and adventurous journey, but also ran the risk of exposing the design of German military aircraft to the British if the machine should be forced to make an emergency landing in Egypt. It indicates the importance given to this task that the German general staff decided to run the risk and to endorse the plan.

This endorsement partially resulted from stepped-up Italian security measures. The Italians had begun to intercept the secret correspondence of the Ottoman representative in Libya with Istanbul. Much of this correspondence simply disappeared, forcing the Ottoman diplomat to rely on the German consular mail in order to receive the Ottoman sultan's letter to Sayyid Ahmad. This letter invited the Sanusiya leaders to join the *jihad* against the British and to leave the Italians well alone.<sup>76</sup> The problem of communication remained of great importance for the entire duration of the war; several intelligence missions had to be aborted as it was impossible for the agents to communicate with their German or Ottoman masters.

There were further problems as far as the courting of Muslim brotherhoods in Africa was concerned. The Germans and Ottomans had decided to include a regiment of Mevlevi-Dervishes and *mūcahidin* sent by Sharif

<sup>73</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A565, Geneva, 05.01.1915: Geissler to Foreign Office (via Berne).

<sup>74</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A356, Berlin, 03.01.15: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>75</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A1680, Berlin, 13.01.15: Nadolny to military attaché Istanbul.

<sup>76</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A2102, Tripolis, 13.01.1915: Dr. Mannesmann to Foreign Office.

Husayn of Mecca in the expeditionary force against Egypt, with the aim to bolster the Pan-Islamic credentials of the undertaking. While in principle a good idea, Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi expressed his doubts about the efficiency of such a move. He believed that the Germans and Ottomans had bet on the wrong horse; only the Sanusiya and Qadiriyya could be relied upon to have some influence in Africa. In order to remedy the situation Shaykh Salih volunteered to have some influential members of the Sanusiya transport messages to Sayyid Ahmad across the Red Sea and the Nubian Desert.<sup>77</sup> The Germans had already recruited their own agent for communicating with Sayyid Ahmad. The chosen candidate, the engineer Hannes Schmidt, was eminently suited for the task: he had worked in Italy for 17 years, and was frequently mistaken for an Italian. Schmidt, previously a correspondent of the "Münchener Zeitung" in Istanbul, offered to go to Egypt disguised as an Italian newspaper correspondent in order to supply the Germans with reliable information for "an unspecified sum of money commensurate with the merit" of his work.<sup>78</sup> Without previously consulting the German Foreign Office Wangenheim sent the new recruit to Berlin, whence he was to go to Egypt via Italy.<sup>79</sup>

By now the Ottoman expeditionary force had already set out on its march to the Suez Canal. As previously mentioned the Germans and Ottomans believed that the campaign stood the best chance of success if the attack on the Canal coincided with a simultaneous attack of the Sanusiya from the Western desert. Yet so far Sayyid Ahmad had not yet indicated that he was prepared to attack. In order to gain information of the Sanusiya leader's plans Dr. Mannesmann, then in Rome to report on developments in Libya, was instructed to return to Tripoli forthwith in late January 1915. From Tripoli he was to travel to Sayyid Ahmad's camp. The support of the Italian officials in Tripolis for his mission had already been secured.<sup>80</sup> Wangenheim recommended to supply Mannesmann with large amounts of money, following Shaykh Salih's advice that financial inducements were most likely to win Sayyid Ahmad over, provided "that the sum exceeds that offered by England." Wangenheim also, quite correctly, pointed out that only Muslim emissaries could be expected to campaign successfully for a *jihad*. Their propaganda was unlikely to produce much support for the current campaign; tangible results could only be expected after several months. But the possibility of further campaigns and the lasting necessity of local allies eager to join the *jihad* made the propaganda effort worthwhile all the same. The Ottomans agreed. Enver's brother Nuri Bey was sent to Libya via Greece to organise and supervise German-Ottoman agitation in the country.

<sup>77</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A2774, Berlin, 20.01.1915: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>78</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A1373, Istanbul, 13.01.15: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>79</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A2903, Istanbul, 20.01.15: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>80</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A3097, Rome, 21.01.15: Flotow to Foreign Office.

For a time mutually advantageous cooperation between the Germans, the Ottomans and the Sanusiya was indeed established. The Sanusiya attacked Egypt at the end of 1915 and managed to capture the harbour of Al-Salum in the extreme west of the country. The Sanusi forces were, however, evicted in spring 1916. From summer of that year the British gradually managed to gain the upper hand in the war in the Middle East. Consequently Sayyid Ahmad refrained from further offensive operations after 1916 and made his peace with the Entente in summer 1917. Sayyid Ahmad retired from the leadership of the brotherhood and was succeeded by his nephew Idris who was to become first king of independent Libya after the Second World War.

### The Problem of Communications

Besides political problems one of the main difficulties for German-Ottoman agents in the field was the lack of a safe and quick way to communicate with their employers. These difficulties rendered several intelligence missions useless, and landed the agents in enemy hands, as was the fate of the German officer von Gumpenberg. In the second case to be discussed, the NILI spy-network, neglect of communication safety ultimately destroyed a most valuable intelligence network.

### Case I - The Mission von Gumpenberg

In March 1915 Freiherr von Gumpenberg, a German reserve officer who had fought in the 1911 war and was a personal friend of Enver Paşa, was sent to Tripolitania. Gumpenberg was to travel to Libya via Athens, Crete and Al-Salum, to report on the state of affairs in the Sanusiya headquarters and, if he saw fit, to accompany the Sanusi troops on the march to Egypt. He was to put further pressure on Sayyid Ahmad to open the attack. His cover identity was to be that of an American newspaper correspondent; it was hoped that a fake American passport would facilitate his travels in the Mediterranean.<sup>81</sup>

On March 27, 1915 Gumpenberg received final instructions. He was to travel as Gustave E. Roeder from Providence, Rhode Island, correspondent of the "New York Herald." His main task was to report about the reaction of the Sanusiya to the proclamation of *jihad*, and of the current state of Sanusi-British relations. Gumpenberg was ordered to find out if the Sanusiya planned offensive actions against Egypt, and when; as well as the numbers and equipment of the Sanusi forces. Gumpenberg was instructed to observe great discretion with Turkish officers or civilian representatives in Libya; he was free to reveal his German nationality to the Ottomans, but was to stress that his position was only that of a journalist and not an agent. The funds for

<sup>81</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A9827, Berlin, 18.03.1915: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

Gumpenberg's mission were very limited, as was his reward in case of success.<sup>82</sup>

Gumpenberg managed to communicate a renewed offer of German arms and funds to Sayyid Ahmad, but had little success otherwise. His identity was swiftly unveiled by the Ottomans, who regarded Gumpenberg's offer as an attempt to deal with Sayyid Ahmad behind their backs. Gumpenberg's intelligence mission was likewise frustrated, mainly due to the lack of an efficient and safe way to communicate with the German authorities. Recalled on Enver Paşa's insistence, Gumpenberg attempted to return to Greece on a neutral sailing vessel. He was arrested during a British search of the vessel and spent the remaining years of the war as prisoner of war in Egypt. Both the British and the French falsely believed him to have been in Tripolitania since the outbreak of war, and portrayed him as one of the main German agents in the region, which he clearly had not been.<sup>83</sup>

## Case II - The NILI or A-Organisation

British intelligence in the Middle East was saddled with difficulties similar to those of the Germans or Ottomans. Only when British policy eventually became one of territorial acquisition did the Middle Eastern war theatre assume greater importance, and was consequently paid more attention. Yet, in contrast to the Germans or the Ottomans, the British occasionally could rely on the support of Ottoman minority groups. The only one of these groups to form an intelligence organisation to aid the British to defeat the Ottoman forces was the Zionists in Palestine. This organisation was founded under the name NILI.

NILI (the name is an acronym of the Hebrew expression *Nazah Israel Lo Ieshaker* (the eternity of Israel shall not lie) was a highly individualist and loosely organised group of eccentric Zionists. It became a most valuable (yet under-appreciated) asset of British intelligence collection in the Middle East. Its founder and director was Aaron Aaronsohn, an agricultural specialist who had set up an experimental station near Athlit on the Mediterranean shore in 1908. In due course he became a highly regarded adviser in agricultural questions for the Ottoman administration.

Aaronsohn based his decision to approach the British not only on personal inclination. As he told Lt.-Col. Walter Gribbon, the British officer with whom Aaronsohn was to cooperate most closely, his decision had been greatly influenced by the Armenian massacres. After the massacres had become common knowledge in the Arab Provinces in the course of 1915 Aaronsohn feared that the Jews and other non-Muslim groups in the Empire might meet the

<sup>82</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A11044, Berlin, 27.03.1915: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>83</sup> PAFO, File R21135, AZ A23548, Berlin, 02.08.1915: *Le Temps*: Arrestation d'un espion allemand (newspaper clipping)/ AZ A25613, Berlin, 30.08.1915: *The Standard*: German Intrigues in Egypt (newspaper clipping)



same fate.<sup>84</sup> In his post-war report on the activities of NILI, Aaron's brother Alexander introduced another, then popular (however false) consideration: the Jews had been prepared to "serve the Turks loyally, but when Turkey threw in her lot with Germany, it became apparent that the Germans were the real leaders of the country." Alexander stated that "the German aspiration to seize the Near East made the Jews feel that all the Zionist hopes for a regenerated Jewish Palestine will come to naught, and a few Palestine Jews after careful deliberation came to the following decisions:

"1. The Turkish-German hold over Palestine must be broken forever. 2. The British government is the most sympathetic to a Jewish Palestine. 3. International Jewry must be won over to the British cause."<sup>85</sup>

These thoughts firmly suggested the course of action NILI was to take. It attempted to strike a deal of mutual benefit with the British: delivery of information, sabotage of German-Turkish troops and installations in Palestine and the potential support of international Jewry in exchange for a firm British commitment to a Jewish Palestine.

NILI was founded by Aaron Aaronsohn, his brother Alexander and Absalom Feinberg, poet and secretary of the Experimental Station in Athlit. In July 1915, before they set out to recruit agents in Palestine Aaron sent Alexander to Egypt on the American cruiser *Des Moines* to enter into negotiations with the British. Although still an Ottoman soldier, Alexander was allowed to leave the country with the help of a fake Spanish passport and reached Alexandria safely.<sup>86</sup> Yet he was at first unable to overcome British suspicions concerning the sincerity of his offer. Frustrated Alexander left for America to propagate the Jewish cause. A second attempt by Absalom Feinberg, who reached Alexandria in August 1915, met with more success. NILI achieved official recognition by the British. The organisation was to collect intelligence

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<sup>84</sup> Although there is no evidence for the suggestion that the Ottoman government did indeed plan massacres of Jews and other non-Muslim groups in the Empire the harsh treatment suffered by the Greeks in the coastal areas of Asia Minor and Cemal Paşa's temporary expulsion of the Jewish population of Jaffa and Haifa in 1916 probably reinforced Aaronsohn's fears.

<sup>85</sup> Verrier, Anthony (ed.): Walter Gribbon: Agents of Empire: Anglo-Zionist Intelligence Operations 1915 - 1919: Brigadier Walter Gribbon, Aaron Aaronsohn and the NILI Ring. London 1995, Appendix A: The 'NILI' or 'A' organisation, 307. NILI referred more to the executive committee than to the entire organisation as such. The organisation itself later became known as the "A."

<sup>86</sup> Verrier, Agents of Empire, 308. American vessels were still irregularly calling on Ottoman ports in Palestine and Lebanon, mostly in order to deliver relief funds donated by American charitable and Jewish organisations.

data in Palestine and communicate it to Egypt with the help of a British trawler commuting once a month between Athlit and Alexandria.

NILI's problems were by no means over. The wealth of its intelligence data and the low cost of their acquisition (NILI's members worked out of idealism and did not expect pecuniary rewards for their troubles) notwithstanding, communications with Egypt were at first grossly mismanaged by the British. Due to problems of signalling, the communication by trawler did not work. This might have brought the operations of NILI to an early end. After several nights' waiting for the trawler on the beach at Athlit and desperate to renew contact with Egypt, Feinberg decided to cross the Sinai desert by camel in December 1915.<sup>87</sup> In the course of this journey he was captured by a Turkish patrol and brought back to Bir Sab'a. His interrogation did not produce any incriminating evidence, and Aaron's intervention with Cemal Paşa (with whom Aaron had good relations) and a hefty bribe managed to secure Feinberg's release. This potential fiasco probably reinforced the British conviction that communication with Athlit by sea was safest. Yet the second attempt fared even worse than the first. The ship struck a mine near Beirut and sank. Lt. Woolley (later to become famous as an archeologist), the intelligence officer on board, was taken prisoner by the Turks. Although this delayed communications between the British and NILI for several months the Ottomans did not develop any suspicions.

The repeated failures to communicate with Egypt convinced Aaron Aaronsohn to try a new method of reaching Alexandria in July 1916. Aaronsohn devised an ingenious scheme, which would allow him to leave Palestine with official backing. He obtained Cemal Paşa's permission to travel to Sweden under the pretence that he needed to consult Swedish agriculturalists about the possibility of using sesame oil as fuel, which was then exceedingly scarce in the Arab provinces. In Stockholm Aaronsohn boarded a passenger liner to America. As he had already arranged with the British, Aaronsohn was "arrested" when the vessel was searched in the English Channel, and brought to London.<sup>88</sup> There he met with British military (Lt. Col. Gribbon) and civilian (Sir Mark Sykes) authorities. Afterwards he was sent to Egypt with the task of re-establishing contact with Feinberg at Athlit. Yet, unbeknownst to Aaronsohn, Feinberg was already dead.

In the assumption that Aaronsohn's long absence meant that he had abandoned NILI Feinberg had again tried to cross the Sinai desert with a friend, Yossef Lishansky. On January 31, 1917, Feinberg was killed during a bedouin attack; Lishansky, badly wounded, managed to escape to a British outpost. After Lishansky's recovery Aaronsohn appointed him head of operations in Palestine.

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<sup>87</sup> Verrier, *Agents of Empire*, 308.

<sup>88</sup> Verrier, *Agents of Empire*, 309.

A trawler brough him back to Athlit, and NILI began its work in earnest in spring 1917.<sup>89</sup>

NILI managed to set up an impressive network of agents. The organisation eventually had 23 "active" and 12 "passive" members. The former had to do the actual work (collecting data from the passive members, travelling the country, meeting the trawler etc.), while the latter collected information in their respective places of residence. These "passive" members were excellently placed to procure information. They included medical officers in the Ottoman army, engineers in charge of road construction, recruiting and commissariat officers and shop-keepers in locations near important railway lines. NILI also furnished influential Jewish personalities with up-to-date information from Palestine to secure their support for the British. Thus the news of Cemal Paşa's eviction of the Jewish population of Jaffa reached the press in Russia, America and even Germany. Liaison between Cairo and Athlit was the responsibility of Liova Shneerson (nicknamed "the owl"). He landed at Athlit at least once a month, often twice; during the return journey the Hebrew documents were translated into English by another member of NILI, Raphael Abulafia.<sup>90</sup>

NILI became more important for the British once Lloyd George had adopted the "Eastern" strategy which envisaged defeating Germany by "knocking out her props", namely Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary, rather than by military operations on the Western Front.<sup>91</sup> The British also increasingly adopted Zionism with in some cases almost religious fervour. Warnings that Pro-Zionist policies might endanger the reputation of the British in Muslim eyes were regularly ignored. Amir 'Ali, a prominent member of the "London Muslim League" met with a rebuff, when he described the proposed creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as a manifest injustice to the Arabs. Furthermore the fear of Zionism might reconcile the Arabs with the Ottoman government, as they would have something to fight for - the survival of an Arab Palestine. The decision in favour of Zionism might therefore be contrary to the policy of disrupting Ottoman internal cohesion. Amir 'Ali also expressed apprehension at the frequent use of the term "crusade" by British officers serving in the region, as it was "unwise and impolitic to depict the war in Palestine as a crusade especially when thousands of Indian Muslim Soldiers were fighting for the British." The Foreign Office, to whom Amir 'Ali had submitted his manifesto resented his advice, called it tendentious and dubbed its author "anti-Christian."<sup>92</sup>

While Amir 'Ali regarded the British commitment to Zionism as too strong, Aaronsohn feared the opposite; in his opinion most prominent British

<sup>89</sup> Verrier, *Agents of Empire*, 310.

<sup>90</sup> Verrier, *Agents of Empire*, 311.

<sup>91</sup> Jackson, General Sir William, Bramall, Field Marshal Lord Bramall: *The Chiefs - the Story of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff*. London 1992, 87.

<sup>92</sup> Abbasi, M. Yusuf: *The London Muslim League 1908 - 1929*. Islamabad 1974, 343.

Orientalists and diplomats were predisposed towards Arab national aspirations. As Aaronsohn noted in his diary after a meeting with T.E. Lawrence in August 1917 his fears were confirmed. Lawrence, "exemplifying the British Orientalists", seemed to be manifestly anti-Semitic and only prepared to accept the continued existence of the Jewish communities in the Middle East if they acquiesced in Arab nationalism.<sup>93</sup>

Aaronsohn's irascible character and his often strained relations with prominent Zionist personalities led to NILI being less enthusiastically supported by the British than could reasonably have been expected. Aaronsohn's accusations against Weizmann and Sokolov's being "devious" and "of annoying pettiness" did not prevent the British from regarding them as more important allies than the eccentric Aaronsohn.<sup>94</sup> Thus NILI could not have any decisive influence on the shortening of the war in the Middle East. Aaronsohn's most valuable contribution to British operational planning was the highly detailed and accurate information he gave Allenby during a meeting in July 1917. NILI reported that the local population was impoverished and was, apart from its "habitually treacherous" nature (Aaronsohn had a strong anti-Arab bias), not to be feared. The Turkish army, however, was another proposition; while NILI described it as "inferior on the whole", it was nevertheless "infinitely superior to what we had expected because it is remarkably well equipped (compared with the past)."<sup>95</sup> This point had already been driven painfully home by the two previous British defeats at Gallipoli and Kut al-Amara. It is thus not unreasonable to suggest that Aaronsohn's informations contributed to Allenby's embarking on an almost over-careful preparation of the third battle of Gaza, which ended in a British victory and the eventual occupation of Jerusalem, through a shrewd campaign of disinformation.

Thus NILI furnished good intelligence and occasionally influenced British policies in the Middle East, but never stood so highly in British esteem as Alexander Aaronsohn's post-war report on the organisation suggested. NILI's agents were idealistic visionaries and not trained agents with a detached view of either the situation inside Palestine or of British politics. The "payment" of 2000 pounds of relief funds, which the British authorities once permitted to be brought into Palestine, was a rather small sum and cannot be mistaken as proof of "great esteem" for NILI's work. Stinginess with money, always a problem for intelligence operations in the Middle East, also contributed to the discovery of NILI's activities by the Ottoman security organs less than ten months after the organisation had begun to function. In the course of 1917 the British increasingly substituted the use of messenger pigeons for the unreliable and expensive method of communication by trawler. One of the pigeons was captured by Ottoman troops near Cesarea. At the same time two Christian

<sup>93</sup> Verrier, *Agents of Empire: Aaron Aaronsohn's Diary*, 289, entry of 12.08.1917.

<sup>94</sup> Verrier, *Agents of Empire: Aaron Aaronsohn's Diary*, 291, entry of 25.08.1917.

<sup>95</sup> Verrier, *Agents of Empire: Aaron Aaronsohn's Diary*, 283: entry of 17.07.1917.

agents of EMSIB (Eastern Mediterranean Special Intelligence Bureau - an independent organisation from NILI) were arrested. The information they gave to the Ottoman security organs about having arrived in Palestine by trawler drew the attention of the Ottomans to the Palestine coast. A short time later Naaman Belkind, a NILI member who tried to cross the Sinai desert in order to ensure the safe arrival of a particularly valuable piece of information, was apprehended. This sealed NILI's fate; all of its members in Palestine were arrested. Sarah Aaronsohn, Aaron's sister, who had directed operations from Athlit since March 1917, withstood five days of torture before taking her own life with a concealed revolver.<sup>96</sup> Belkind and Yossef Lishansky were publicly hanged in Damascus, while the remaining members of NILI were sentenced to varied terms of imprisonment either at Damascus or at Istanbul.<sup>97</sup>

Although two death sentences were handed out, the NILI agents received much less severe sentences than the 30 Arab notables hanged in late 1915 and early 1916, indicating that the Ottoman authorities did not regard NILI or the Jewish community of Palestine as a great danger to Ottoman security. Another reason might also be interference by German authorities, who were the main protectors of the Jewish communities in Palestine during the First World War.<sup>98</sup>

## Conclusion:

The conquest or "liberation" of Egypt was central to German and Ottoman war plans. But German and Ottoman military and diplomatic planners involved with the organisation of this "liberation" often suffered from a total lack of understanding of the conditions within Egypt. The organisational structures within which they had to operate did not make matters any easier.

The diplomatic correspondence of the period between August/September 1914 and February 1915 displays a rather unsettling lack of unity in the German and Ottoman leadership. Both allies regarded the campaign against Egypt as an important issue, yet they greatly differed regarding the goals to be achieved. The Ottomans and Cemal Paşa in particular intended to re-conquer the country and to reincorporate it into the Ottoman Empire as a province. The Germans regarded the adverse effect a defeat in Egypt would have on Britain as of primary importance. American ambassador in Istanbul Henry Morgenthau even claimed that Wangenheim had indicated that Germany did not wish Turkey to be successful in Egypt. The German ambassador believed that a victory-swelled Ottoman Empire would be far more difficult to subject to German designs than

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<sup>96</sup> Sarah Aaronsohn has often been identified as the mysterious "S.A.", to which T.E. Lawrence dedicated his "Seven Pillars of Wisdom". This is highly improbable, as Lawrence never met Ms. Aaronsohn, and as has already been pointed out, was less than enthralled by the works of Zionist organisations in Palestine.

<sup>97</sup> Verrier, *Agents of Empire*, 313.

<sup>98</sup> See Friedman, *Isaiah: Germany, Turkey and Zionism 1914 – 1918*. Oxford 1977.

a Turkey whose military record seemed to be interminably marred by failures and defeats. Although Morgenthau's account of his years in Constantinople is highly biased, this piece of evidence is not entirely unreasonable.<sup>99</sup>

The basic problem was that sufficient military force for the re-conquest of Egypt could not be provided; consequently cooperation by the Egyptian populace in form of a rebellion against the British was essential. The Germans attempted to incite this rebellion right from the outbreak of war. Yet in order for this propaganda effort to succeed the Egyptian campaign had to be portrayed as an attempt to "liberate Egypt from foreign rule" - and that meant British as well as Ottoman rule. The Germans found themselves trying unsuccessfully to secure the cooperation of parties which had few, if any, interests in common.

The German and Ottoman intelligence organisations were too underdeveloped to procure enough information to convince the political decision-makers of their expectations from Pan-Islamic propaganda. The Germans had no organisation of skilled intelligence agents other than diplomats to obtain information about the areas in question. German ambassadors and consuls, as a rule, were observing and intelligent men, but, with the exemption of Wangenheim and consul Loytved-Hardegg in Jaffa, intelligence work was somewhat out of their field. For further information, especially about attitudes and belief in the non-urban areas where Europeans rarely ventured, the Germans had to rely on private sources - businessmen, "professional travellers", academics. This in itself should not have been a disadvantage. The sources show that these individuals often offered their information to the German authorities and even volunteered to carry out covert operations. But these private volunteers were up against a formidable foe - official German notions of "professionalism." Frequently their offers were received with a great deal of mistrust about the "reliability" of the given individual. Furthermore, negative judgements passed by the German authorities were frequently based on grounds of the volunteer's social standing, not his experiences or knowledge of the region.<sup>100</sup> This official snobbery deprived the German leadership of valuable assistance for its intelligence and, as we shall see, propaganda operations. These individuals could also have assisted the Germans in evaluating the claims of the various indigenous "revolutionaries" to be genuine representatives of their people.

Thus the evaluation of potential allies in the target countries remained the responsibility of an extremely small circle of German officials. Their personal impressions also carried great weight in the selection of intelligence agents. Unfortunately, many of these men - Oppenheim first and foremost - were poor judges of character. Their shortcomings were reflected in the disappointing results of German intelligence and propaganda operations.

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<sup>99</sup> Morgenthau, *Secrets of the Bosphorus*, 67

<sup>100</sup> See f.e. von Oppenheim's treatment of Mr. Sievers.

Even more problematic than the collection of information and recruitment of intelligence agents was the sifting and analysing of the available evidence. The nascent German intelligence community was of an equally makeshift nature as the networks of field agents. Frequently clashes of opinion delayed important decisions. This continuous bickering between various individuals involved in intelligence analysis also did not help the reputation of the intelligence services in the eyes of German military and political decision-makers. Intelligence operations throughout the war were directed by very few individuals on the fringes of the Foreign Office and the German general staff. Even in the cases where decisions had eventually been made they often could not be implemented, as the distribution of information from the Foreign Office to local diplomats also was often less than perfect.

The available sources tell us only little about Ottoman intelligence gathering in Egypt and Tripolitania. There are a few isolated remarks about Ottoman intelligence operations in Libya in German diplomatic correspondence. The Ottoman intelligence services were regularly praised for their efficient network of agents. Many of these agents had probably been recruited by the Ottomans in the war of 1911; Ottoman officers had assisted the Sanusiya in its struggles against the Italians, and Egypt, still nominally Ottoman territory at the outbreak of war, also was a rather open book. The problem lay more with the use of available information. The Ottoman Empire had a far more personalised style of government, and the analysts of information usually had also political interests. As Philip Stoddard has pointed out, each member of the triumvirate had his own intelligence-gathering outfit; consequently it is reasonable to expect that Enver, Talaat and Cemal used the intelligence available to them both for their own interests and German-Ottoman strategical designs. The respective status of German-Ottoman relations of course also dictated how much of this information was made available for the use of the Germans.<sup>101</sup> These relations were often strained, due to the difference of interest between the two allies. Ottoman leaders wanted to re-conquer lost territories and to enhance their personal glory and reputation. The Germans wanted to harm Britain, but keep the Ottoman Empire industrially and economically weak so that even in the case of a re-conquest of Egypt the Ottoman territories would form a giant producer of raw materials and purchaser of German industrial goods.

Even more damaging were the tensions which frequently existed between the Ottomans, the Germans and the representatives of the native peoples in Egypt or Libya. Often even the nationalists were divided over the question of objectives. The only aim Muhammad Farid, Muhammad Fahmy, Dr. Mansur Rifat, Shaykh Shawish, the Khedive and Ottoman Grand Vizier Sa'id Halim Paşa could agree upon was to rid Egypt of the British. The more radical ones like Dr. Rifat and Shaykh Shawish, as professionals without large land

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<sup>101</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 1.

properties, were unconcerned about the possibility that a popular rebellion in Egypt could lead to profound changes in the existing political and social order of the country. Yet social revolution was something the wealthy and more conservative nationalists (i.e. the Khedive, Sa'id Halim or Muhammad Farid) wished to prevent. Their fears greatly dampened their enthusiasm for intelligence and propaganda work in Egypt.

Yet a popular rebellion in Egypt was the only way to overcome the basic problem of the Ottoman war effort, namely that an enemy superior in numbers and equipment had to be fought from a position of scarcity in materiel and manpower. Propaganda, espionage and covert actions might yield great and cheap victories, but both the Germans and the Ottomans overestimated the power of these means. The lesson that these operations could only augment, but not replace, military force had to be learnt the hard way. From 1916 onwards the fortunes of the Central Powers in the Middle East took a turn to the worse. This not only meant the end of German-Ottoman offensive operations in the Middle East, but also cast the death spell for the possible success of German and Ottoman Pan-Islamic propaganda.



## **Chapter 4 - Manufacturing Support: German and Ottoman Propaganda Operations**

### **Introduction**

For Germany, the alliance with the Ottoman Empire was both a liability and an asset. Ottoman military power was an as yet unknown variable; but there were a fair number of more or less competent observers of "oriental affairs" who thought that the power of the Ottoman Empire lay as much in the propagandistic appeal of the sultan-caliph, whom they expected to be able to call upon widespread support all over the Muslim world. For the German propagandists therefore two objectives had to be pursued: first, that the proclamation of jihad by the sultan-caliph was to be spread into all parts of the Muslim world; second, Ottoman internal cohesion was to be preserved to allow the Ottoman Empire to concentrate its military power on fighting external, not internal enemies. Only then could the Pan-Islamic trump-card be played to full fruition. While the idea of jihad-propaganda had already been mentioned by military specialists such as Bronsart von Schellendorff, it fell to Max von Oppenheim to devise a proper organisation for this propaganda effort. Oppenheim was able to convince the German authorities that such propaganda could indeed yield benefits to the German war effort. In this he was to be proved wrong. Yet there were no skilled individuals who could have countered Oppenheim's proposals or at least given them a much-needed reality check.

### **Oppenheim's Plan**

In October 1914 Max Freiherr von Oppenheim set out his plans for Pan-Islamic propaganda in a memorandum, "How to Revolutionise the Islamic Areas of Our Enemies." Undersecretary of state Zimmermann submitted it to General Headquarters with the request to forward it on to the Kaiser.<sup>1</sup>

There were two factors Oppenheim regarded as essential for the success of German propaganda in the Muslim-populated areas of Germany's enemies: First, intensive and close cooperation between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, seat of the sultan-caliph and second, a rigid and strict organisation of all such activities. As events were to show, neither of the two conditions was fulfilled.

In the baron's view Germany had to assist Turkey with war materials, skilled personnel and money to facilitate the Ottoman military successes which Oppenheim considered vital for the success of Pan-Islamic propaganda. Neither cost nor effort was to be spared, as "half measures were destined to remain

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<sup>1</sup> Schowingens, Karl Emil Schabinger von: Weltgeschichtliche Mosaiksplitter. Erlebnisse und Erinnerungen eines kaiserlichen Dragomans. Unpublished ts, 1962/63, 115.

useless." The baron put great importance on abundant funds, which the German authorities, in the end, were unwilling to provide. Among other reasons this official German parsimony was behind the ultimate failure of German propaganda operations.<sup>2</sup>

According to Oppenheim's plan the sultan-caliph was to proclaim a "qualified" jihad immediately; qualified in the sense that it was to be fought against Britain, France and Russia, not against all *kafirs* (infidels).<sup>3</sup> This proclamation was to be accompanied by propaganda to be carried out from a central institution in Istanbul modelled on the propaganda institution Oppenheim proposed to set up in Berlin, the "Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient (Intelligence Office for the East, hereafter IOfE). Some "tactful and qualified" Germans, who were to keep up the pretence to be only friendly advisers to the Turks, should act as supervisors of this Ottoman propaganda institution.<sup>4</sup>

Oppenheim pressed for predominant importance to be given to India and Egypt, while he regarded the Caucasus and North Africa as secondary targets. Oppenheim believed that rebellions in Egypt would only break out after the start of Ottoman military operations, but had to be prepared by extensive propaganda, which should also target Indian soldiers in the country. Propaganda material was to be sent from German diplomatic missions in neutral countries with the help of cautious and skilled agents (Oppenheim wrote "no adventurers!"). This material was to target the Muslims only; the baron believed the Egyptian Christian population and Ottoman Christians generally to be incurably pro-Entente, desirous of Christian-European rule and even to be prepared to become spies for the Entente.<sup>5</sup> The baron's views were probably accurate, for historical and cultural reasons: France had for centuries been the protector of Ottoman Catholics, Russia that of the orthodox Christians, and Britain had assumed the role of protector of the Protestants, in which it competed with the United States and, especially in Palestine, with Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Schabinger, Mosaiksplitter, 116.

<sup>3</sup> The proclamation of jihad on November 14, 1914 limited the enemies to be fought in the Holy War to the "enemies of Islam" France, Russia and Great Britain. The Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck-Hurgronje gleefully pointed out in his booklet *The Holy War made in Germany*, New York 1915, that such a "limited *jihad*" was an unheard-of thing in Islamic history, and quoted the German professors C.H. Becker and Martin Hartmann as references. Both had extensively denounced the appeal or even existence of Pan-Islam before the war, but nevertheless participated eagerly in German Pan-Islamic propaganda during the war. Oppenheim's reasoning was based on other grounds, namely to prevent suffering of neutrals, and Hindu - Muslim violence in India.

<sup>4</sup> Schabinger, Mosaiksplitter, 117.

<sup>5</sup> Schabinger, Mosaiksplitter, 118-120. In the course of the war Oppenheim was occasionally blamed for Ottoman repressive measures against non-Muslim minorities. An article of "The Times" from October 10, 1915, declared: "The Jewish baron Oppenheim has advocated massacres of Christians, and the German consular officials at Aleppo and Alexandrette have followed suit." See FA/MA, File RM40/V.410, 08.10.15.

The baron believed Muslim rebellions in India would have the most damaging effect on British military planning and economy. An obstacle for the success of German propaganda was the supremacy of the moderates among the Indian nationalists, but the baron hoped that German support for the radicals would hopefully overcome it. Oppenheim had founded a committee of radical Indian nationalists, exiled in Germany and Switzerland. It had 18 members, mostly educated Muslims, but also including some Hindus and Sikhs. Its most famous member was the revolutionary Har Dayal.<sup>6</sup> Further areas to be targeted were Persia, where the population was deeply anti-Russian and anti-British, Afghanistan ("a considerable power, whose invasion of India could only meet with the greatest success") and North Africa.

The memorandum concluded with recommendations how to win over Muslim POWs from India and Africa correctly and how to convince them to join the Turkish army. They were to be interned in the same camp and given all facilities to be able to obey their religious prescriptions (especially construction of a mosque, pork-free diet and assistance to fulfil Muslim religious duties).<sup>7</sup> The prestige of the German Emperor also was a most useful propaganda tool in the Muslim world; in the spirit of Wilhelm II's "Muslim speech" of 1898 Oppenheim stated that Germany had the obligation to "use Islam as well as strengthen it as much as possible."<sup>8</sup>

### The Intelligence Office for the East (IOfE)

German officialdom was initially reluctant to accept Oppenheim's proposals and also quite unwilling to bear the considerable cost of the IOfE. Oppenheim's rather dubious personality, which led the German establishment to regard him more as a dandy than a diplomat, also might have been a reason for the lack of official enthusiasm for the IOfE. The baron's views about Pan-Islam were by no means unanimously accepted. They were based on the information he had obtained through intensive contacts with an elder generation of Egyptian or other Middle Eastern elites, not through intensive study and detached observation or analysis.<sup>9</sup> Oppenheim also had an inclination to exaggerate and invent, which both his official superiors and the German Orientalists, who claimed the monopoly of qualified knowledge of Middle Eastern affairs, often frowned upon. Thus both the baron and the IOfE remained on the fringes of the Foreign Office and did not get the attention they deserved. In all likelihood Oppenheim's propaganda institutions, the IOfE and from April 1915 his

<sup>6</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 121. See also OPA, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim: *Zu der Nachrichtenstelle der Kaiserlichen Botschaft in Konstantinopel*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> This proposal was realised. Muslim POWs were transferred to a camp near Wünstorf in Lower Saxony, which came to be known as the "Halbmondlager (Crescent Camp)."

<sup>8</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 124 – 125.

<sup>9</sup> Treue, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 64.

"Nachrichtenstelle der Kaiserlich Deutschen Botschaft (Intelligence Office of the Imperial German Embassy)" in Istanbul represented attempts to incorporate Oppenheim into the establishment, from which he felt excluded.<sup>10</sup>

The IOFe, which the baron founded in September 1914, was initially paid for by Oppenheim himself; only in 1915 was the organisation properly funded by the Foreign Office. At first it did not even get proper accommodation. Lack of office space necessitated its move from the Foreign Office building in the Wilhelmstrasse, Berlin, to the *Reichskolonialamt* (Imperial Colonial Office), and eventually to a spacious flat in the Tauentzienstrasse.<sup>11</sup> The IOFe began its existence as an organisation both short of manpower and funds. In the beginning it set out to produce propaganda material, notably war reports about the situation on the Western Front, and a propaganda newspaper for Muslims POWs under the title *al-Jihad*; later both personnel and tasks to be performed expanded continuously, often taxing the IOFe personnel's stamina to the breaking point. This reflected the German official attitude, which regarded Pan-Islamic propaganda as an interesting and potentially worthwhile experiment, but remained nevertheless focused on the Western Front. The war in the Middle East was regarded as Turkey's business. Yet the differences in German and Ottoman interests in the Middle East, which were soon to emerge, made a central organisation of German and Ottoman propaganda impossible and strongly contributed to its ultimate failure.

The personnel of the IOFe consisted of academics, diplomats, businessmen and missionaries, many of whom had practical experience from work in the Near and Middle East. In spite of official scepticism and their own doubts of the existence or appeal of Pan-Islam before the war, German Orientalists served in the IOFe in large numbers. As a later commentator noted:

"The facility with which sincere and dextrous hands may shape cases on either side of a controversy, leaves no doubt that, in the future, the propagandist may count upon a battalion of honest professors to rewrite history, to serve the exigencies of the

<sup>10</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 115.

<sup>11</sup> Treue, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 60. Funding remained one of the main problems of the IOFe. Consul Karl Emil Schabinger von Schowingen, Oppenheim's successor as director of the institution (March 23, 1915 to February 22, 1916), pointed out that during his term in office the IOFe was only given a monthly allowance of 5000 RM; the institution needed considerably more. Schabinger's successor Prof. Mittwoch asked the Imperial German treasury for 100 000 RM at the end of the financial year 1917/18. Oppenheim himself invested large sums of money, which the imperial organisations refused to refund in February 1918. Schabinger described this situation aptly by stating "that the Odol-Toothpaste and Mouthwash Company invests more in its advertising than Imperial Germany for its war propaganda". See also Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 150ff.

moment, and to provide the material for him to scatter hither and yon."<sup>12</sup>

The institution was structured into sections, each headed by a German and encompassing both German and Middle Eastern personnel.

#### **Table 4.1: Internal Organisation of the IOfE**

##### **I, 1: Arabic Section, German personnel:**

Professor Eugen Mittwoch, director (became director of IOfE 03/16 - 11/18)

Dragoman Pröbster (served in Morocco before the war)

Dragoman Schabinger (Oppenheim's successor as director of IOfE 03/15 - 02/16)

Apprentice Dragoman Schröder

Dr. Ruth Buka

Dr. Curt Prüfer (became the most important German intelligence agent in Syria and Palestine)

##### **I, 2: Arabic Section, Arab Personnel:**

Dr. Ahmad Vali (Egyptian, lecturer at Faculty of Oriental Languages, Berlin University)

Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi (Tunisian, also member of TM)

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish (Egyptian, famous Pan-Islamic radical, also member of TM)

Dr. Muhammad Mansur Rifat (Egyptian doctor, nationalist radical in exile in Switzerland)

1st lieutenant Rabah Bou Kabouya (Algerian, formerly of the French army, wrote propaganda leaflets under the name of Al-Hajj 'Abdallah)

Two grandsons of the famous Algerian independence fighter 'Abd al-Qadir

##### **II, 1: Persian section, German Personnel:**

Professor Oskar Mann, director (died in 1915)

Dr. Sebastian Beck (succeeded Mann in 1915, later professor in Faculty of Oriental Languages, Berlin University)

##### **II, 2: Persian Section, Iranian Personnel:**

'Asadullah Khan Hidayah

Takizade

Kazemzade

(Hidayah, Takizade and Kazemzade formed Persian Committee in Berlin)

<sup>12</sup> Lasswell, Harold D.: Propaganda Technique in the World War. London 1927, 53, quoted in Ungern-Sternberg, An die Kulturwelt!, 109.

### **III, 1: Turkish Section, German Personnel:**

Professor Martin Hartmann, director

Dr. Walter Lehmann

Dr. Gotthard Jäschke

### **III, 2: Turkish Section, Turkish Personnel:**

Halil Halid Bey (former Ottoman consul-general in Bombay)

Selaheddin Bey (Ottoman naval commander, working as translator)

Dr. Saadi (journalist, dismissed for reasons of "unreliability and homosexuality")

### **IV, 1: Indian Section, German Personnel:**

Ferdinand Grätsch, director (missionary)

Dr. Helmut von Glasenapp

Ernst Neuenhofer (businessman)

Mr. Walter (missionary)

### **IV, 2: Indian Section, Indian Personnel:**

18 members of the Indian Independence Committee in Berlin, among whom:

Har Dayal (famous Hindu revolutionary)

Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (also acted as German agent in the Balkans)

### **V: Chinese Section:**

Dr. Herbert Müller

### **VI: Russian Section:**

Harald Cosack

Georgian and Tatar members (most importantly Georgian National Committee active in the final months of the war)

### **Further Members:**

Heinrich Jacoby (businessman, director of "Persian Carpet Company", representative of IOfE in Switzerland until 1918, organised contacts with Egyptian nationalists in Geneva)

Dr. Willy Haas (replaced Jacoby in 1918)

Friedrich Perzynski (specialist and dealer in oriental art, became the editor-in-chief of the "Neuer Orient (New Orient)", the periodical publication of the IOfE)

Source: OPA, AB, Chapter XIV: Political. Report by Prof. von Glasenapp on the members of the IOfE, 05.06.1935

The institution was organised as a "Kollegiatsbehörde (democratic institution)," which had no hierarchy. If Oppenheim had designed it that way in the expectation that the expertise of different backgrounds and careers could be put to best use, the result was quite the opposite. According to Oppenheim's successor consul Schabinger, the absence of a hierarchy meant that decisions could only be made when consensus between the members existed. This was, however, rarely the case. The director of the IOfE had only one, quite powerful, tool in order to ensure compliance: most of the members of the IOfE were of military age and could be threatened to be put at the disposal of the military authorities. This rather cynical instrument appears to have been necessary to provide at least some leadership, which was lacking in the initial months of the existence of the IOfE. Schabinger was arguably better suited to provide such leadership than Oppenheim; he was used to the hierarchical system of the diplomatic service and an authoritarian and energetic personality. While the consul sometimes trod on the toes of his subordinates, especially the oriental employees of the IOfE, many of whom were extremely sensitive with regard to protocol and personal honour, Schabinger's task fully justified a tough stance; it was left to him to forge an efficient organisation after Oppenheim's departure for Istanbul in March 1915. Schabinger was often exasperated with the academics, as "they were not at all used to doing regular and punctual work."<sup>13</sup> Such tensions between a professional civil servant on the one hand and academics on the other was probably inevitable; the frequent clashes between Schabinger and oriental employees of the IOfE or frequent contributors, such as the Egyptians Dr. Ahmad Vali and Dr. Muhammad Mansur Rifat, likewise might largely be ascribed to differences originating in cultural attitudes rather than to personal malice on either of the two sides.

The German staff members of the IOfE also were quite frequently at loggerheads with each other or otherwise dissatisfied with the state of affairs, as indicated by a lengthy report by Dr. Max Adler, who from September 1914 onwards was in charge of the POW newspaper *Al-Jihad* and of despatching periodical war reports. The report was written in response to harsh criticisms from the Foreign Office accusing the IOfE of ineffectual work and the production of useless material. Dr. Adler fully concurred. He proposed the transfer of responsibility for the war reports to local consulates in the Middle East, which were better suited to produce up-to-date material than the IOfE. Thus local attitudes and expectations could also be taken into account. The POW newspaper had two problems: only a fraction of the prisoners was literate, and the rather makeshift nature of the newspaper had the prisoners regard it with the greatest suspicion. Instead of *Al-Jihad*, he argued, Turkish newspapers should be used and read out by literate prisoners. Dr. Adler also complained that German members of the IOfE had not consulted him regarding the publication

<sup>13</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 126.

of suitable "oriental" articles in the German press. The organisation for the supply of news to the Middle East also was sadly deficient, as was the sifting through the foreign press, especially of the Entente states. Through such neglect a most valuable propaganda tool, namely to prove the Entente's enmity towards Islam from its own press, was ignored. Under such circumstances Dr. Adler declared himself unable to continue his work for the institution and quit on June 1, 1915.<sup>14</sup>

Although Oppenheim had designed the IOfE as an institution both for the gathering of intelligence and using this information for propaganda purposes the second activity increasingly became the mainstay of the IOfE.<sup>15</sup> The first task was gradually assumed by the national committees, with whom Oppenheim had inaugurated contacts from August 1914. Initially these consisted of an Indian Committee ("Indian Independence Committee", hereafter IIC, in Berlin) and the "Young Egyptians" (in Geneva). The Young Egyptians were particularly useful for their ability to communicate with Egypt from neutral Switzerland. Later the IOfE came to cooperate with a Georgian and a Persian Committee. In 1915 Director Jacoby of the Persian Carpet Company Ltd. began to work with the Egyptian nationalists in Geneva, most intensively with Muhammad Farid and Muhammad Fahmy, the latter being the successor of Mustafa Kamil as leader of the Egyptian *Hizb al-Watan*. Jacoby seems to have been a charming and efficient character, and his work with the Egyptians in general yielded good results.<sup>16</sup> In Berlin relations between Schabinger and "oriental" members of the institution or the nationalist committees often were strained, usually due more to differences of aims pursued by the Germans and the nationalists than to personal disagreements.<sup>17</sup> The Germans had a basically rational and logical attitude as far as the formulation of policies for the Entente colonies was concerned, which might be summed up as "win the war first, squabble about the spoils later." The nationalist committees naturally put their own goals, foremost independence of their countries, above those of Germany or the Ottoman Empire. None of them wanted a German Egypt or India, and the majority of Egyptians, although desirous of getting rid of the British, opposed a reincorporation of their country into the Ottoman Empire as an ordinary province. The leader of the Young Egyptian committee bluntly expressed this view by saying that "we would rather have British than Turkish rule."<sup>18</sup> There also were deep rifts between rival factions of Egyptian nationalists. In their attempts to support all factions and Ottoman aspirations at the same time the Germans merely wasted their energy. In the case of the Egyptians, Khedive

<sup>14</sup> PAFO, File R1501, A17982, Berlin, 05.06.1915: Adler to Wesendonk.

<sup>15</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 132.

<sup>16</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 133.

<sup>17</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 150 – 155.

<sup>18</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A33044, Geneva, 02.12.1914: Geissler to Foreign Office; File R21127, AZ A2903, Berlin, 22.01.1915: Oppenheim to Foreign Office.



Abbas Hilmi desired to be reinstated as viceroy, but had a rival for his claim in Ottoman Grand Vizier Sa'id Halim Paşa. There also was little love lost between Abbas Hilmi and Enver Paşa, who suspected the Khedive of being ready to refrain from hostile acts against the British in exchange for access to his enormous wealth in Egypt, in which Enver was probably correct. Once instructed that the Ottoman army would conquer the country for Turkey and not for Abbas Hilmi the Khedive swiftly lost interest and even tried his hand at counter-propaganda in Egypt. Frightened by an attempt on his life, which he blamed on the CUP, he first went to Vienna and later to Switzerland. While Enver and Sa'id Halim were probably glad to be rid of the Khedive the Germans continued to regard him as vital for the outbreak of a popular rebellion. Thus, although the Egyptian nationalists were ready to act without the Khedive's support, the Germans thought this to be impossible.

While most of the Egyptian nationalists were of a fairly conservative notable background the Indian Independence Committee consisted of avowedly radical revolutionaries. They had been marginalised by the course of moderation then adopted by the Indian national congress. The radicals also were deeply divided over the policies to pursue in order to achieve Indian independence. The result was frequent back-stabbing, the Indian revolutionaries often acting as if the "opponents" were not the British but other members of the committee. Under these circumstances success of Ottoman propaganda in India was most unlikely. In fact the only success scored by the IIC (as alleged by Schabinger, and not corroborated by other sources) was the acquisition of information which played a role in the torpedoing and sinking of the armoured cruiser HMS Hampshire, on which Lord Kitchener travelled to Russia in 1916, by a German submarine.<sup>19</sup>

In their recruitment of propaganda agents the Germans exhibited the same almost pathological mistrust as when dealing with potential intelligence agents. This attitude became the more problematic as the Germans were not exactly spoilt for choice. The number of individuals who could carry out such work in the Near East was small, and there were no professional agents. The majority of volunteers for propaganda work failed to overcome the distrust of the German authorities and the IOFE.

Caution was in some cases justified, both in regard to individuals as to proposed operations, and as to what the IOFE could hope to achieve generally. Schabinger reported to the Foreign Office on February 5, 1916 his misgivings

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<sup>19</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 133. The sinking of the Hampshire has become the object of a flourishing industry of speculation and conspiracy theories. Although there is no definite proof most naval historians agree that the ship probably struck a mine; however, if it was not a stray mine (the sinking thus being simply an accident), but a minefield laid by the Germans they would have had to know in advance the projected course of the cruiser, which deliberately avoided popular shipping routes. The same holds true for sinking the ship with torpedoes.

about the plan to incite the Afghan army to march on India, then under consideration by the German military and civilian leadership. Schabinger believed that most probably the invading Afghans would be opposed both by the British and a large part of the Indian population; worse, the Japanese might be tempted to invade India, which they had coveted for a long time.<sup>20</sup> The result could only be a conflagration in India which would prolong, and not shorten, the war. Britain could not be expected to make peace with her enemies in Europe in order to retain an unstable colony it might lose for good within a short time. Schabinger instead proposed to have the Afghans march on Russian Central Asia and Iran, where they could join the Turkish army.<sup>21</sup>

The IOF's propagandist successes, on the whole, were modest, if not disappointing. In a report of summer 1916 Schabinger listed rising anxiety of the French and the British about the loyalty of their Muslim troops and the colonies among the most important successes. Defectors were few in number. In one case the British replaced Indian troops on the Western Front with British troops, due to the presence of Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi, who had called for Holy War from the German trenches with the aid of a megaphone.<sup>22</sup> British and French recruitment in the colonies seems to have become more and more difficult in the course of the war, but this might rather be ascribed to news from the front which described the atrocious conditions of living and fighting, and less to pan-Islamic propaganda from the IOF.

Schabinger's conclusion was surprising, although possibly accurate: the real fruits of the propaganda could only be reaped after the end of the war (which Schabinger still expected to be won by Germany in 1916).<sup>23</sup> Oppenheim himself was a trifle less modest. Although he admitted that his revolutionary propaganda did not yield the expected results (revolts in India), he maintained that the propaganda had occasionally been reason for great anxiety for the British and had served to keep them from sending additional troops to the Western Front. The cooperation with the IOF, in the baron's opinion, nevertheless had done the Indian nationalists no end of good. "The revolutionary propaganda was a failure. But I always said that the Indian nationalists would advance in their quest for national independence, and that truly happened."<sup>24</sup> While the First World War certainly was a watershed in British-Indian relations and inaugurated the end of British rule in the

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<sup>20</sup> Although this idea sounds far-fetched, the Japanese enjoyed a high military prestige in Germany since their victory over the Russians in 1905. They were regarded as the expanding power in eastern Asia, particularly after the conquest of the German protectorate Kiauchow in late 1914.

<sup>21</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 136 – 139.

<sup>22</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 145.

<sup>23</sup> Schabinger, *Mosaiksplitter*, 146 – 149.

<sup>24</sup> OPA: Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, „Zur Nachrichtenstelle der deutschen Botschaft in Konstantinopel“, 3.

subcontinent the results from the work of the IIC and the IOFE could only be called negligible.

### Propaganda in the Ottoman Empire

German propaganda in the Ottoman Empire was mostly carried out by the local consulates. These were supplied with propaganda material from the Intelligence Office of the Imperial German Embassy in Istanbul. Although their endeavours met with varying levels of success most of the consuls corroborated Dr. Hoffman's findings from his journey to Syria and Palestine in September 1914. The German consul in Damascus, Mr. Schiesser, translated and distributed official German war reports. By hiring public storytellers he also had come up with an ingenious solution to the problem of high illiteracy (and consequently a small reading public). Consul Matties in Beirut, on the other hand, experienced difficulties to get news to and from Mecca and Medina. The problem was the low speed of the mail, as the best time for propaganda was the annual pilgrimage season when pilgrims from all over the Muslim world converged on the Hijaz. Matties estimated their number for 1914 to be approximately 90,000 (the number was almost certainly grossly inflated). The Ottoman central government was reputed to be worried that Entente propaganda had won Sharif Husayn over to the Pan-Arab, anti-Ottoman camp; the CUP had therefore decided to "resolve the problem bloodily"; exact information was, however, impossible to obtain.<sup>25</sup>

It soon became apparent that the consuls' apprehensions were justified. Much to German chagrin the proclamation of *jihad* on November 14, 1914, did not lead to the immediate outbreak of revolts in Entente Muslim colonies, and appeared not to be received as enthusiastically by Ottoman Muslims as expected. The consul's opinions were also influenced by the results Ottoman propaganda had achieved in the months immediately before the outbreak of war.

The objective of Ottoman propaganda was mostly to strengthen the idea of Pan-Islamic solidarity; in some cases, as found in propaganda leaflets intended to weaken the morale of British and French soldiers in Gallipoli, it also stressed the superiority of the Ottoman army and its determination to fight until victory was achieved.<sup>26</sup>

The newspapers in which propaganda articles appeared were both the daily newspapers (such as *Tanin*, *Sabah* and *İkdam*), and newspapers founded especially for propaganda purposes (such as *Défense Nationale*, *Shark* etc.).

<sup>25</sup> PAFO, File R21127, A10937, Damascus, 15.10.1914: Matties to Foreign Office

<sup>26</sup> IWM, Box 80/47/2: Private Papers of Sir Gerard Clauson. Ottoman Propaganda leaflet with translation into English dated 15.10.1915. The leaflet is headed „O English and French soldiers!" but written in Ottoman Turkish; this is a bit strange, as few of the addressed soldiers could be expected to have a command of the Turkish language.

Again the Germans seem to have involved themselves greatly in pan-Islamic propaganda of this sort, mainly through the IOFe and the German-language paper in Istanbul, the *Osmanischer Lloyd*.

Ottoman propaganda did not limit itself to Pan-Islamic topics, but also frequently appealed to the patriotic feelings of the Ottoman population and fervently tried to incite hostility against the Entente powers. The CUP regarded the stirring up of hatred against the Entente powers as an absolute necessity if any popular support for the Ottoman entry into the war was to be created. Anti-Entente propaganda had, however, been generously aided by the British government, which had impounded two warships ordered by Turkey then under construction in British shipyards on August 3, 1914. The funds for these ships had been raised by Ottoman popular subscription, and the seizure of the ships greatly alienated Ottoman public opinion from the British. Churchill's high-handed approach about refunding the price for the vessels was the last straw. The CUP was not slow to exploit this fabulous opportunity for a propaganda coup. On August 25, 1914, several Ottoman newspapers reported that all units of the Ottoman fleet had been deliberately damaged by the British naval mission. The aim behind the sabotage had been to prevent the ships from offering any resistance in the case of war, but the scheme had been frustrated and it was expected to be only a matter of time until the British naval mission would be dismissed. Germany's generosity, which consisted of providing two modern warships as replacements for the impounded vessels and of specialist support for the repair of the Ottoman ships, was greatly commended.<sup>27</sup>

During October 1914 Ottoman public support for entry into the war was carefully cultivated. In Jerusalem the vali assembled the local notables and told them that the Ottoman Empire was going to fight to defend its very existence; the perilous military and economic situation had made an alliance with a "strong Christian power" indispensable. Thus the notables were exhorted to overcome their prejudices and to treat the Christian allies with due respect. Every evening a public prayer "for the victory of Germany and Austria-Hungary" was held on the forecourt of Al-Aqsa mosque.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the Ottoman newspapers announced, Muslim leaders all over the world were preparing to join in the hostilities once the sultan-caliph had proclaimed Holy War. The amir of Afghanistan, according to an Istanbul newspaper, had assembled 400,000 soldiers for the invasion of India. A second army of 300,000 men was about to set out for Russia.<sup>29</sup> The *caids* (tribal leaders) of Morocco had proclaimed holy war against the French and the rebellion was said to be spreading quickly.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.208., Deutsche Tageszeitung, 25.08.1914.

<sup>28</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.208, Kölner Volkszeitung, 18.09.1914.

<sup>29</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.208, An Istanbul Newspaper, 02.10.1914.

<sup>30</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.208, Tasvir-i Efkiar, 10.10.1914.

Diplomatic steps were also undertaken and published in order to demonstrate the righteousness of the Ottoman cause. On October 20, 1914, Sultan Mehmet V Reshat protested formally, "for the last time", against the continued occupation of Egypt by Britain. Khedive Abbas Hilmi II reiterated the protest. He called on Britain to refrain from any acts of government in Egypt until his return.<sup>31</sup> The British reacted most unwisely as far as propaganda was concerned. The Khedive was barred from returning to Egypt and soon afterwards was deposed in favour of his uncle Husayn Kamil. This gave Abbas Hilmi the occasion to launch a press barrage, in which he claimed that Britain's rule in Egypt was cruel and oppressive. The British had violated the neutrality of the country by expelling the consuls of the Central Powers and to prohibit the use of the Suez Canal by German and Austro-Hungarian ships. Also the use of Muslim troops by the Entente powers was strongly criticised by the Ottomans.<sup>32</sup>

Dissatisfied with the results of propaganda and in need of detailed information, Oppenheim asked for reports from the consulates in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad and Trabzon about their propaganda activities in mid-November 1914. The reports were to be as detailed as possible and were also to cover local political rumours and the political atmosphere in general.

The German consul in Jaffa, Dr. Brode, had managed to secure the support of the editor of the local newspaper *Filastin*, who previously had been on the French payroll. His efforts had, however, been frustrated by the suspension of the newspaper by the Ottoman authorities due to some anti-CUP articles. Dr. Brode then had articles and essays, particularly anti-British ones, translated into Arabic. Leaflets received from the consulates in Damascus and Aleppo had also been distributed. He felt it necessary to concentrate on reducing British prestige in the region due to Britain still being "popular in Palestine due to the proximity of Egypt and British support for the decentralisation party." Official war reports were publicly displayed in German, French and Arabic. With the support of the Ottoman authorities, and German commercial enterprises in Palestine with branches in Egypt, propaganda material had been smuggled to Egypt, either baked into bread or sewn into the shoes of travellers. The consul noted with dismay that the newly aroused national pride of the Turks was beginning to affect negatively the generally good relations between German and Turkish authorities, as Germany still hoped to preserve its previous privileges. The local Christian population, which openly sympathised with the French, was problematic. By hinting that only the authority of the German consul had so far prevented a massacre of Christians, Brode had temporarily intimidated some recalcitrant Christian leaders to refrain from hostile actions.

<sup>31</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.208, Italian Newspapers, 20.10.1914.

<sup>32</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.208, Ikdam, 28.10.1914.

He had, on the other hand, failed to bring the Jewish population to support the Ottoman government actively.<sup>33</sup>

In Aleppo consul Rössler had similar experiences. Articles containing polemical attacks against the Entente, which the proprietor of the only privately-owned local newspaper *Taqaddum* had refused to print, had been printed and distributed as leaflets by the consulate. Until December 11, 1914, 47 different propaganda leaflets had been printed, first in print runs of 500 and later of 1000 copies. One hundred copies each had been sent to other German consulates in the Arab provinces; the remainder had been distributed in Aleppo, Deir al-Zur, Hama and Homs. The leaflets were regularly sent to the Beirut newspapers *Al-Ra'y al-'Am*, *Al-Mufid*, *Fatah al-'Arab* and *Al-Ittihad al-Uthmani*, as well as to Urfa, Marash and Aintab. Communications with Egypt had been cut by sharp British censorship. War reports and pictures changed every three days were openly displayed in front of the German school. They attracted considerable public attention. Although Rössler lamented the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Turkish authorities at least the local Bedouin population was now better treated by vali Celal Bey than in the past, which could be expected to lessen their hostility to the Ottoman government.<sup>34</sup>

Consul Loytved-Hardegg in Damascus explained the necessity to increase German propaganda with the observation that Germany had been almost unknown in Syria before the war while France, Britain and Russia had been highly active. To redress this situation Loytved-Hardegg proposed to advance in three steps: first, the Muslim population had to be enlightened about the "true nature" of Germany; second, it had to be convinced of the benefits of an alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Finally, Muslim hostility against the Entente powers and active Muslim support for the Ottoman war effort had to be generated. This last task was not easy to achieve as the Syrians were "more mercantile than warlike," and did not trust the Ottoman government. To improve the reputation of the Ottoman government in Syria Loytved had established personal contacts with government officials, religious notables and newspaper editors in Damascus, Haifa, Acre and Nablus, and also organised pro-Ottoman sermons in mosques of Damascus, Medina and Cairo. War reports were regularly published in Arabic and Turkish, and afterwards distributed in Damascus, the Hawran, Medina and Haifa. Pilgrims in the Hijaz had also been targeted. To increase the available media for propaganda a newspaper was founded which was staffed by the editors of the Beirut dailies *Al-Mufid*, and *Al-Ra'y Al-'Am* and the periodical *Al-Babil*, who had been persuaded to move their offices to Damascus with financial incentives. Financial assistance from Cemal Paşa also had allowed the reopening of the prominent newspaper *al-Muqtabas*.

<sup>33</sup> PAFO, File R21128, A5037, Jaffa, 11.12.1914: Brode to consul-general Schmidt, Jerusalem.

<sup>34</sup> PAFO, File R2128, A5137, Aleppo, 11.12.1914: Rössler to Wangenheim.

The authorities had organised mass demonstrations with the support of religious notables and political clubs, with the aim "to awaken a feeling of solidarity among the Muslims." An interesting novelty was the public display of propaganda films.

Lloytved was, however, guardedly optimistic about the possible success of the propaganda effort. While the propaganda was not completely ineffectual, and local pride and Islamic solidarity had certainly been awakened, "it could not be expected to see many heroes coming out of a people that for decades has lived in egotism and partisanship."<sup>35</sup>

Consul Hesse in Baghdad also had undertaken to distribute propaganda leaflets in Arabic and Turkish. Articles had been published in the local press, particularly the local CUP-newspaper *Al-Zuhur*. Through hefty bribes, however, the Russian consul-general had prevented the publication of propaganda articles in the newspaper *Al-Riyadh*, which was sponsored by the Sa'udi amirs. At Hesse's instigation the newspaper had been suppressed by the Ottoman authorities. Propaganda material had been sent on to Teheran, and had been distributed in the coastal areas of the gulf, southern Arabia and southern Persia. British watchfulness had prevented the smuggling of propaganda leaflets to India. Hesse had taken particular pains to supply the Shi'ite clergy of Najaf and Karbala with propaganda material and enlisted the support of local Islamic brotherhoods for its distribution in the Caucasus, Turkestan and India. "Gentle pressure" by the Turkish authorities had managed to win over the Shi'ite clergy to the idea of holy war.

Hesse also addressed a great problem for German propaganda in the Middle East: extremely low literacy (less than 2 per cent). The situation was particularly grave among the bedouin; this had allowed British anti-Ottoman propaganda, which was carried out by agents visiting the tribes and lavishly distributing gold and weapons, to succeed in the past. Thus, as Hesse correctly pointed out, it was money and weapons, not words which were needed to raise the martial spirits of the bedouin against the British invasion. The consul regarded appeals to Pan-Islamic solidarity as generally doomed to failure in "an Arabia that has been torn by sectarianism for centuries."<sup>36</sup> The consulate in Trabzon had undertaken similar activities, with the aim of not only influencing the local population but also nearby Iranian Azerbaijan.<sup>37</sup>

The most prolific German propaganda agent in the region was Dr. Prüfer in Jerusalem, who was able to monitor the reactions of the local populations to propaganda through his network of intelligence agents. According to Prüfer the main problem facing German propaganda in Palestine and in the Arab provinces was Sharif Husayn's links with the British and his bad relations with the

<sup>35</sup> PAFO, File R21128, A5037, Damascus, 21.12.1914: Loytved-Hardegg to Wangenheim.

<sup>36</sup> PAFO, File R21128, A5037, Baghdad, 10.12.1914: Hesse to Wangenheim.

<sup>37</sup> PAFO, File R21128, A5037, Trabzon, 10.12.1914: Lehmann to Wangenheim.

Ottoman authorities. It had so far not been possible to send German propaganda missions to the Hijaz and southern Arabia due to the lack of German diplomatic representation at the Sharifian court. While this would have to be tackled in the future, the position of the press in Syria was generally positive. With the exemption of some pro-Entente Zionist newspapers, the Syrian press was sympathetic to the Germans. The official censors had hitherto been pro-Entente Zionist Jews, but they were expected to be replaced once the German general Back Paşa, the new military governor of Jerusalem, had arrived.

Dr. Prüfer noted that there were serious deficiencies in the propaganda campaign against Egypt. The Transjordanian town of Ma'an was too remote to serve as a local propaganda centre. The German press had not helped matters either, by publishing grossly exaggerated reports about Turkish preparations, thus forewarning the British. Prüfer's small intelligence network had discovered that neither the Egyptian nor the Sudanese troops on the canal front were likely to defect to the Ottoman army. There was not much help to be expected from the Egyptian nationalists, who were split into a conservative pro-Khedivial and a radical anti-Khedivial faction. The former was led by Muhammad Farid Bey, the latter included Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish, Fuad Selim Bey, 'Abd al-Malik Hamsa Efendi and Isma'il Kamil Efendi. Prüfer also had so far failed to win Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif's support for an Egyptian campaign. As already mentioned, sabotage operations carried out by Gondos and Dr. Simon had been less successful than expected; yet the two Austrians were already organising some new projects, including the destruction of the railway bridge across the Nile at Nag Hamadi 500 km south of Cairo. Dr. Prüfer also warned the German authorities not to expect too much from irregular troops and bedouin agents, who were "cowardly and demanding." Proof for this was the effortless eviction of an irregular force of some 1800 men led by TM agent Mümtaz Bey from Western Sinai by a small Indian detachment. Considering the military situation it was unlikely, as the Ottoman military authorities admitted that the expedition could achieve the re-conquest of Egypt, but at any rate the main reason for going ahead was political. The enthusiasm for the Holy War that German-Ottoman propaganda had endeavoured to manufacture in Syria and Palestine was lukewarm and could be expected to be short-lived unless the promise of military operations was quickly fulfilled. Cancelling the expedition would also destroy morale in Egypt itself, as the arrival of the victorious Turkish army had already been announced with leaflets and emissaries. In any case an Egyptian up-rising would only happen if the Turks managed to establish control of the Suez Canal.<sup>38</sup>

As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, German consuls pursued an extensive propaganda activity, but were either unconcerned or openly pessimistic about its effectiveness. Dr. Prüfer was very aware of the serious

<sup>38</sup> PAFO, File R21128, A5037, Jerusalem, 31.12.1914: Prüfer to Oppenheim.



Ottoman military shortcomings which prevented the propaganda effort to have credibility. German propaganda also failed to address the emotions of its recipients, and tried to convince by argument, which the consuls doubtlessly regarded as the only proper way to conduct propaganda. The British were less concerned with gentlemanly warfare, as an example of British propaganda found after a commando mission against the railway near Iskenderun indicated: it was a folding picture, which put a German soldier together from four pigs. The local German consul was outraged: he reported about this "childish, ungentlemanly instrument of warfare," without realising that such rather ingenious propaganda ruses could meet with more success than all proclamations.<sup>39</sup>

Still, Muslim public opinion in general appeared to be pro-German. A Muslim religious scholar in Beirut came up with what must be termed as one of the most ingenious defences against anti-German statements made by the Entente press: "Germany has invaded Belgium to take revenge for the Muslims on Godfrey of Bouillon."<sup>40</sup> Although Muslim sympathies were certainly welcome news, the consuls found Ottoman public opinion, especially of non-Muslim communities, deeply divided over the war and the Ottoman-German alliance. There was prolific enemy propaganda, and large sections of the Ottoman population leaned openly towards the Entente powers. Wangenheim took this problem very seriously. In early spring 1915 he sent an "SOS"-call to Berlin. British and French aircraft had dropped thousands of propaganda leaflets over all Greek- or Arab-inhabited areas (Western Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia). They had announced that the German armies were defeated and on their way back to Berlin, which was expected to fall presently to the Entente. The Greeks and Arabs were instructed to kill all German and Turkish officers and to ally themselves with the Entente armies whose arrival was expected soon.<sup>41</sup>

Wangenheim's calls for a reliable and experienced individual to be sent to Istanbul resulted in Oppenheim's posting to Istanbul. The baron had already applied for permission to travel to the Middle East. In his proposal, dated March 2, 1915, Oppenheim laid out his plans to go to Syria in order to study the local situation with regard to efficient propaganda and the organisation of information gathering in the Middle East. The final request in this application sheds light on the apparently difficult situation of the IOFe in the first six months of its existence. Oppenheim pointed out that undersecretary of state Zimmermann had issued a directive on December 12, 1914, which ordered the IOFe to be supplied with copies of all official telegrams regarding Middle Eastern affairs.<sup>42</sup> The

<sup>39</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.676, Iskenderun, 28.01.1915: German consul to ambassador Istanbul.

<sup>40</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.490. Godfrey of Bouillon was a prominent leader of the first crusade in 1099.

<sup>41</sup> OPA, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim: „Personalities“, 24.

<sup>42</sup> Treue, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 66.

baron politely complained that this directive appeared to have been ignored in the past and asked for matters to be put in order.<sup>43</sup>

It is not too difficult to explain the relative neglect of the IOfE: it was a tiny institution on the fringes of the Political Department of the Foreign Office, and very few officials knew about its existence. Oppenheim's complaint has to be seen as an attempt to save his institution from being cut off from vital information without which it would not be able to carry out its work. As Oppenheim had proposed, his successor as director of the IOfE became Dragoman Karl Emil Schabinger von Schowingen. After Schabinger's posting to Jaffa and later Jerusalem (in February 1916) he was in turn succeeded by Eugen Mittwoch, professor of Arabic in the Institute of Oriental Languages at Berlin University. Professor Mittwoch held this post until the end of the war. Liaison with the Foreign Office became the responsibility of legation secretary Otto von Wesendonk.

The baron's plans for his journey were ambitious. Oppenheim wanted to establish a vast propaganda organisation spread over the Ottoman Empire, which also should manage to communicate with Egypt, Sudan, Abyssinia and other Entente colonies in Africa, Persia, Afghanistan and India. Accurate information about the war (i.e. from the German point of view) was to form the mainstay of the propaganda effort; Oppenheim also hoped to find out which contents and form of information were likely to be successful. The organisation also was to furnish the Turkish and German governments with regular news from Syria and the Arab provinces. An effort would be made to enlist the support of religious brotherhoods, 'ulama, local notables and tribal shaykhs for the propaganda effort.<sup>44</sup>

Oppenheim had realised the necessity of intensification and restructuring of the propaganda campaign upon receipt of the above mentioned reports concerning local conditions from German consulates all over the Ottoman Empire. To this purpose he proceeded to set up the *Nachrichtensaalorganisation* (Organisation of News Rooms).

The *Nachrichtensaalorganisation* aimed at spreading German and Ottoman propaganda material to counter the allegedly wide-spread enemy propaganda networks.<sup>45</sup> The "Newsrooms" were located in "the largest local buildings, facing an open square."<sup>46</sup> They contained propaganda material in the form of books, brochures, newspapers, leaflets, and large placards depicting the crowned heads of Turkey, Austria-Hungary, Germany and, from late 1915 onwards, Bulgaria. Each newsroom displayed the most recent telegrams with

<sup>43</sup> PAFO, File R21129, A7805, 02.03.1915: Oppenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>44</sup> Treue, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 67.

<sup>45</sup> Oppenheim himself ascribed his despatch to the Ottoman Empire to a request by German ambassador Hans von Wangenheim. See Oppenheim: "Zur der Nachrichtenstelle der deutschen Botschaft in Konstantinopel", 4.

<sup>46</sup> Oppenheim: „Personalities“, 25.

reports about the war in the local languages in a glass box besides the entrance gate.<sup>47</sup>

The material to be displayed in the newsrooms came from Oppenheim's "Intelligence Office of the German Embassy", which at first was located in the embassy itself and later in a rented house close to the "Grand Rue de Pera."<sup>48</sup> Eventually over 70 newsrooms existed all over the Ottoman Empire.<sup>49</sup> Oppenheim claimed that they were extremely successful, asserting that the largest newsroom in Pera was visited by "20 000 people daily", though this is probably to be taken with a pinch of salt.<sup>50</sup>

### Oppenheim's Propaganda Activities in the Second Half of the War

Besides reorganising German propaganda, Oppenheim also intended to reconcile the Ottoman government with influential Arab personalities by using his personal contacts. He regarded Sharif Husayn of Mecca as the key factor to gain Arab support for the Ottoman war effort; consequently he immediately proceeded to mediate between Cemal Paşa and Amir Faisal during the latter's visit to Istanbul in March-April 1915. At his request Ahmed Shafiq Paşa, personal secretary of Khedive Abbas Hilmi II introduced the baron to Faisal, who impressed Oppenheim favourably. The baron was convinced that Husayn's troubles with the Young Turks originated with threats from the Ottoman government to have the Sharif replaced with one of his nephews (who continuously intrigued to that end in Istanbul) and with a disagreement about the status of the Hijaz as a province. Emboldened by the completion of the Hijaz railway, the CUP increasingly adopted plans to establish direct control over the province, which Husayn claimed to be autonomous.<sup>51</sup> The appointment of Vehip Paşa, a tough and determined general, as vali of the Hijaz, had escalated the conflict between Husayn and the central government considerably in the three years before the outbreak of war. Vehip Paşa intended to establish Ottoman authority in the Hijaz for good, thereby threatening Husayn's position.<sup>52</sup>

After a visit to the Hijaz in February 1915 Professor Moritz reported his apprehensions about the situation in the Hijaz. The vali could not rely on support from the troops nor the civil officials, and least of all on the government in Istanbul. The troops were scattered, underpaid and could hardly cope with the climate. Civil officials, especially telegraph and telephone operators, were frequently in Sharif Husayn's pay, which Vehip Paşa had tried to counteract by

<sup>47</sup> Oppenheim: „Zu der Nachrichtenstelle der deutschen Botschaft in Konstantinopel“, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Oppenheim: „Personalities“, 24.

<sup>49</sup> Oppenheim: „Personalities“, 25.

<sup>50</sup> Treue, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 71.

<sup>51</sup> OPA, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim: „Zur Angelegenheit des Aufstandes im Hijaz während des Weltkrieges“, 23.01.1943, 1.

<sup>52</sup> OPA, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim: „Zur Angelegenheit des Aufstandes...“, 1.

appointing them to different locations, which the officials concerned greatly resented. There were also financial considerations; the government had to economise while Sharif Husayn could afford to be generous due to his income from the annual pilgrims' traffic. Within the area under his immediate power, the triangle of Mecca-Medina-Yanbo, Husayn controlled all communications. Faysal even had the post intercepted and thus prevented Vehip Paşa from sending reports to and receiving instructions from Istanbul.<sup>53</sup>

Although the Ottoman government's patience with Sharif Husayn ran out and matters reached the breaking point in 1915 Oppenheim advised caution and restraint as mainstay of Ottoman policy in the Hijaz. He regarded Husayn's support for German-Ottoman propaganda as vital; moreover, the baron mistakenly saw the sharif as an energetic, farsighted and reasonable man whom he expected to come round once properly treated by the central government.<sup>54</sup> Oppenheim believed that the best way to secure Husayn's cooperation would be to offer help to overcome the most pressing problem of the Hijaz, which was the scarcity of foodstuffs. The province had to be provisioned with grain from Syria or Egypt; the situation was aggravated during the pilgrimage season, when several tens of thousands of pilgrims increased the demand for foodstuffs.<sup>55</sup> Dependence on Egyptian grain imports, however, gave the British a certain control over Sharif Husayn. In Oppenheim's view, Ottoman policy in Arabia had hitherto been more concerned with combating British influence than serving the needs of the populace. While this alienated the population from the Ottoman government it gave local notables the chance to portray themselves as defenders of the people against a seemingly unconcerned government, thus enhancing their prestige and power. Ultimately this situation might lead to the secession of the Hijaz altogether. While Oppenheim knew that small Arab nationalist societies were agitating for autonomy he was convinced that Husayn himself had no wish to secede from the Ottoman Empire unless pressed beyond endurance by the central government.<sup>56</sup>

Oppenheim clearly understood that for local notables, in the Arabian Peninsula as elsewhere, the question of support, neutrality or hostility was a question of a *quid pro quo*. The different positions of the three most powerful leaders in the Arabian Peninsula at the time might be quoted as an example. Ibn Rashid, amir of the Shammar, stayed loyal to the Ottomans as they formed his only guarantee against his most powerful rival, Ibn Sa'ud. Sharif Husayn, on the other hand, felt himself threatened to such an extent that he decided on sedition; and Ibn Sa'ud, probably the only real winner of the war in Arabia, "discovered

<sup>53</sup> PAFO, File R21128, A6229, Damascus, 16.01.1915: Moritz to German Foreign Office.

<sup>54</sup> PAFO, File R21133, A17149, Constantinople, 22.05.1915: Oppenheim to Bethmann Hollweg.

<sup>55</sup> Anscombe, Frederick J.: *The Ottoman Gulf - the Creation of Kuwait, Saudi-Arabia and Qatar*. New York 1997, 143.

<sup>56</sup> OPA, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim: „Zur Angelegenheit des Aufstandes...“, 2.

the value of patient, pragmatic *realpolitik*" and remained neutral.<sup>57</sup> Neutrality was by all means the most popular choice for Middle Eastern notables during the Great War. Rather than plunging into rebellious or revolutionary adventures which might easily cost them their influence, they were sitting on the fence and waited to see which side the fortunes of war would favour. These notables made their decisions on pragmatic, not ideological grounds; long after the war Oppenheim described George Antonius' praise for Sharif Husayn and Faysal as Arab nationalist heroes as "slightly exaggerated."<sup>58</sup>

At least on paper Oppenheim's meeting with Faysal in May 1915 ended in success. Faysal pointed out Sharif Husayn's problematic situation and urged the Ottoman government to agree to the autonomous status of the Hijaz; if the CUP could "actively forgive him" the Sharif promised to carry out Pan-Islamic propaganda in the Sudan, northern India and Somaliland. Husayn also offered to reconcile Ibn Sa'ud and Ibn Rashid and to "create an army of Arabs to accompany the army of Cemal Paşa on his campaign against Egypt."<sup>59</sup>

Enver Paşa and Talaat Bey could be prevailed upon to guarantee the Sharif's autonomous status until further notice. Oppenheim apportioned a large share of the credit for this satisfying conclusion to himself. He probably exaggerated his influence, as the baron had no official standing. Enver and Talaat were fully capable of appreciating that the pan-Islamic propaganda effort, in which they then still put considerable expectations, would be seriously undermined if Husayn should decide to secede; on the other hand, the battles at Gallipoli absorbed all troops normally available to subdue the Hijaz.

As a result of the meeting with Faysal Oppenheim was able to score another success. He concluded an agreement with Sharif Husayn under the title "Project of a Program of Islamic Propaganda."<sup>60</sup> It obliged the Sharif to assist in conveying the declaration of *jihad* to the Muslims of the Entente colonies and in persuading them to open hostilities against their colonial overlords. A fortnightly publication was to be printed in Mecca containing news about the war, Turkish, Austrian and German victories and general political news of importance. The object of this propaganda effort was to counter Entente propaganda which had tried to convince Muslims of Turkey's inferiority in arms. Propaganda articles were to be written by Dr. Vassel, former German consul at Fez, in Istanbul, and to be authorised by Enver Paşa and the German ambassador. The first of the periodic reports was to contain the fetvas proclaiming the *jihad*, and the information that the title of *ghazi* had been bestowed upon sultan Mehmet V Reshat. Printing material (including silk for

<sup>57</sup> Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 172.

<sup>58</sup> OPA, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim: "Zur Angelegenheit des Aufstandes...", 3.

<sup>59</sup> Oppenheim, AB, Chapter 19: "Political Affairs, Memoirs of Shafik Paşa: His Highness the Khedive and the World War," 1 - 5.

<sup>60</sup> Treue, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 68.

the fabrication of messages to be smuggled into enemy territories) and skilled personnel would be provided by the Ottoman government. The Sharif regularly would be informed how many copies in which languages (i.e. Urdu, Persian, Hindi etc.) were to be printed. Husayn also was to send envoys to preach revolution to the Entente colonies. They were to enlist the support of religious brotherhoods and *madrassa*-students. The whole operation was to be undertaken in a "military, punctual and regular" manner. The Sharif was to furnish Istanbul with regular reports of his activities.<sup>61</sup>

Husayn had been accepted as a propaganda agent by the Ottoman authorities, but there was still enough suspicion against the Sharif to have Enver demand safeguards. One of Husayn's sons would have to command an Arab unit to be incorporated into the 4th army.<sup>62</sup> In exchange Husayn was to be given a generous subsidy for his propaganda effort; the sharif was paid 5,000 Turkish liras as first instalment, with Enver's promise of 10,000 more to come.<sup>63</sup>

In his memoirs Oppenheim did not blame Sharif Husayn for rebelling against the Ottomans; the propaganda agreement had convinced the baron of the Sharif's sincerity, and he believed that Husayn had been deliberately driven to rebellion by Cemal Paşa's executions of Arab notables and by the constant threats from the central government to depose him. On receiving news from Faysal concerning the fate of the notables Husayn had seen no alternative than to attempt to set himself up as an independent monarch with British support. Oppenheim claimed that the date for the rebellion had been postponed due to the talks he had held with Faysal in 1915. They actually seem to have had some impact, as Faysal corroborated Oppenheim's impression during a visit to Berlin in the early 1930s.<sup>64</sup>

Oppenheim's reasoning, however, does not sound entirely convincing. The reason for Enver's tolerance of Husayn's previous behaviour was in all likelihood based on the powerlessness of the central government to take efficient action against the recalcitrant Sharif. Husayn appears to have realised this clearly; both Cemal Paşa's acts in Syria and the Ottoman victories at Gallipoli and Kut al-Amara convinced him that the Ottoman government not only intended to strengthen its grip on the Arab provinces, but would soon have the means to do so.

In contrast to Enver's sober analysis the Germans allowed themselves to be persuaded by Oppenheim that Sharif Husayn was indeed loyal to the Ottomans,

<sup>61</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V. 732, "Projet de Programme de la Propaganda Islamique", (n.p.n.d.). See also PAFO, File R21133, A17149, Berlin, 22.05.1915: Programm für die unter Mitwirkung des Groß-Scherifen von Mekka zu entfaltende islamische Propaganda.

<sup>62</sup> PAFO, File R21133, A17149, 15.05.15: Enver Paşa's instructions for Sharif Husayn of 09.05.1915.

<sup>63</sup> PAFO, File R21133, A17149, 15.05.15: Oppenheim's report concerning negotiations with Faysal.

<sup>64</sup> OPA, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim: „Zur Angelegenheit des Aufstandes...“, 4 – 5.

in spite of the far more critical opinion of Husayn's character expressed by the majority of long-serving German diplomats in the Arab provinces. Oppenheim's trust in Sharif Husayn originated largely with the baron's personality; he usually trusted personal intuition more than facts. As events were to show the baron's view that "the Grand-Sharif of Mecca was a man very devoted to Turkey and to the sultan" was curiously lacking in substance. Also Oppenheim, eager to prove himself an influential German representative in the Middle East, wanted to believe in Husayn's loyalty, as the propaganda agreement with the Sharif represented a major achievement for the baron. Oppenheim was not often a good judge of character; his favourable opinion of Cemal Paşa was not shared by most of the German officers and officials who had been in contact with him.<sup>65</sup>

At least within the Arab provinces the establishment of Pan-Islamic solidarity intended by German propaganda was doomed to failure by the political realities, which were a struggle between the forces of governmental control on the one hand and the advocates of local autonomy, or later independence, on the other. In his opinion of Sharif Husayn Oppenheim was indeed wrong; less than six months after having concluded his Pan-Islamic propaganda agreement with Oppenheim the Sharif entered into a similar agreement with the British.

In January 1916 the Arab Bureau in Cairo had become operational and embarked at once upon a counter-propaganda campaign against Ottoman pan-Islamic propaganda, which the British still regarded as extremely threatening. A number of Arab journalists, such as Dr. 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, were recruited for this purpose. A weekly newspaper, *al-Kawkab*, was set up under the editorship of shaykh Muhammad al-Qalqili. The journalists regularly contributed articles to *al-Qibla*, the propaganda newspaper of Sharif Husayn, which had been founded with British financial assistance at the same time.<sup>66</sup> The foundation of *al-Qibla* had not been Sharif Husayn's idea, but that of the Syrian journalists working for the Arab Bureau. The idea had been supported and endorsed by Sir Wyndham Deedes; he had commissioned the Syrian journalist Fu'ad al-Khatib to submit a memorandum about the character and the aims of the newspaper. Al-Khatib set the following objectives:

"1.To persuade the Muslim world by sensible proofs of the righteousness of the Arabian movement, that it had been solely promoted by the Arabs themselves and was categorically in the interests of Islam.

<sup>65</sup> Treue, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 69.

<sup>66</sup> Abi Shakra, British Wartime Propaganda, 68.

2.To give a clear explanation about the standing of the Turks, and the doubtful position of the Unionists towards Islam after their recent revolution.

3.The proclamation of the plan of the Arab revolt in the whole Arabian Peninsula.

4.To persuade the public that the interests of Islam and the Allies were coherent and that with the triumph of the Germans the independence of weak nations, "particularly the Muslim one," would end."<sup>67</sup>

The newspaper was to be translated into all Muslim languages and to be published in Mecca. Its Pan-Islamic orientation is indicated by its justification for the Arab revolt, which was couched in Islamic and not Arab nationalist terms. Sharif Husayn himself claimed that "the preservation of the Islamic community was the central issue in the struggle."<sup>68</sup> A later edition of *al-Qibla* took a more detailed line of attack on the CUP:

"The Ottoman flag has been lowered in Crete, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Ottoman islands in the Mediterranean. Tripoli has been sold by them (to the Italians), Kurdistan and southern Iraq have been occupied by the (European) powers, even Salonica the Ka'bah of the Unionists has been lost to the Greeks."<sup>69</sup>

In short, the CUP was portrayed as unreliable rulers, who were simply unable to defend the Ottoman Empire as a state, Islam as a religion, and the Muslims as a people. They were puppets in the hands of Germany and were even planning to avail themselves of infidel (German) soldiers to fight against the "soldiers of God."<sup>70</sup>

It was, however, the superiority of British arms in the region and notably greater financial generosity of the British which managed to secure them an ally in Sharif Husayn. Besides the Arab Revolt, British propaganda was as unsuccessful in promoting rebellions against the Ottoman government as the German propaganda proved in the British colonies.

In 1916 Oppenheim returned to Berlin. The Newsroom-organisation was transferred to the *Deutscher Überseedienst* (German Overseas Service), which specialised in commercial propaganda. The IOFE, now under the directorship of Professor Mittwoch, also functioned independently. Over all one gets the

<sup>67</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 75 – 76.

<sup>68</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 78.

<sup>69</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 81.

<sup>70</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 82 – 85.



impression that the energetic baron found himself a bit marginalised. In 1917 Emperor Wilhelm II ordered him to meet General von Falkenhayn, then in charge of Ottoman operations on the Palestine front.<sup>71</sup> They discussed the potential of Oppenheim organising propaganda among the Bedouin in Palestine, but the scheme was never implemented, chiefly due to personal differences between Oppenheim and Falkenhayn.<sup>72</sup> In July 1918 Oppenheim proposed to Liman von Sanders an effort to split the rebellious Arabs and the British, which Cemal Paşa had already tried in November 1917. Arab-British relations had turned rather sour, and the Arabs might be persuaded to rejoin the Ottoman forces.<sup>73</sup> Liman expressed interest in the proposal, but the Ottoman collapse in Palestine after the battle of Meggido rendered the endeavour obsolete.<sup>74</sup> The proposal had probably originated with 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri, who had become increasingly disillusioned with Sharif Husayn and suspicious against the British from late 1916. After an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate peace with the Ottomans 'Aziz 'Ali had been removed from his post as chief-of-staff of the Sharifian army, and gone into exile in Spain.<sup>75</sup> In early 1918 he offered his services to the German consular authorities to make peace between the Ottomans and the Arabs. The proposal was initially rejected due to German suspicions, reinforced by the Young Egyptians in Switzerland, who claimed that 'Aziz 'Ali was a British agent.<sup>76</sup> Enver Paşa's hostility against 'Aziz 'Ali damaged the latter's credibility even further. The Germans still allowed themselves to be persuaded by al-Misri of his influence;<sup>77</sup> his threats to put himself at the disposal of the British unless financially supported by the Germans led to his being paid a monthly stipend by the German military

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<sup>71</sup> The figure of the German emperor was frequently used by Oppenheim to raise his own personal prestige. But his relations to the emperor were, according to other sources, far less intimate than he described them. See Treue, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 60.

<sup>72</sup> Oppenheim, AB, Chapter XII: "Political Affairs", 9. Oppenheim's negative judgement of Falkenhayn's character is corroborated by Kress von Kressenstein, who saw in Falkenhayn one of the main obstacles for smooth cooperation between German and Turkish officers in Palestine. See Kressenstein, Friedrich Freiherr Kress von: *Mit den Türken zum Suezkanal*. Berlin 1938, 165.

<sup>73</sup> Oppenheim, AB, Letter to Liman von Sanders, 28.07.18.

<sup>74</sup> Oppenheim: "Political Affairs", 9.

<sup>75</sup> Abi Shakra, *British Wartime Propaganda*, 33.

<sup>76</sup> PAFO, File R21140, AZ A14943, 13.04.1918: Wedel to Political Section of the German General Staff (hereafter PSGGS).

<sup>77</sup> PAFO, File R21140, AZ A25890, 11.06.1918: Military Attaché Madrid to PSGGS; PAFO, File R21140, A42940, 23.06.1918: Undersecretary of State to PSGGS.

attaché.<sup>78</sup> In late October 1918 the Germans eventually decided to try out 'Aziz 'Ali's proposal, but, not surprisingly, the scheme came to naught.<sup>79</sup>

### The Results of German Propaganda in the Estimate of German Observers

Oppenheim's attempts to put the German-Ottoman alliance to some use always displayed nebulosity. They were built on the idea that words alone could be powerful enough to keep Turkey loyal to Germany and also to preserve Ottoman internal cohesion. Others, such as Humann, the naval attaché of the German embassy in Istanbul, analysed the situation more carefully and came up with quite a different picture. Especially after 1916 German officers travelling in Anatolia often reported on the mixed feelings of local populations. Depending on the region and the level of war-induced shortages the population was either war-weary or downright hostile. A frequently-heard statement claimed that "Germany has drawn Turkey into the war and now does not deliver the goods."<sup>80</sup>

Humann had already predicted such attitudes. In December 1915 he had stipulated that mutual trust between Germany and Turkey was essential for the continuation of the alliance. Yet Germany was increasingly unpopular even in the highest ranks of the Ottoman government. The pro-German section (Enver, Talaat and Halil) was besieged by an anti-German faction. Humann appealed to the German authorities to assist Turkey to assert herself as a strong and independent state, and especially not to be too obsessed with Ottoman atrocities in Anatolia. Ambassador Neurath (Wangenheim had died in autumn 1915) was therefore a great danger for good German-Turkish relations, as Enver had complained that Neurath was "obsessed with the Armenian question" and gave the impression of being hostile to Turkey.<sup>81</sup>

The fate of Armenians and other, mostly Christian, minorities in the Ottoman Empire during the Great War indeed put a great burden on the German-Ottoman alliance. In the battle areas of eastern Anatolia the deportations could, with some reason, be seen as motivated by the desire of maintaining Ottoman national security, but the far larger number of deportees in other regions of the Empire proved a continuous embarrassment for Germany in the Entente and neutral press. Germany regularly fared worse than Turkey. While the Ottomans were, after all, the "terrible Turks", the Germans had always claimed to form a part of the western cultural establishment. The atrocities committed by German troops in Belgium, and the massacres suffered

<sup>78</sup> PAFO, File R21140, A19913, 10.05.1918: German Military Attaché Madrid to PSGGS; PAFO, File R21140, A23643, 04.06.1918: PSGGS to Military Attaché Madrid.

<sup>79</sup> PAFO, File R21141, zuA42940, 07.10.1918: Undersecretary of State to PSGGS; PAFO, File R21141, A42940, 13.10.1918: Military Attaché Madrid to PSGGS.

<sup>80</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.208, 17.08.16: report by reserve-lieutenant Schmiedike to Humann.

<sup>81</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.208, 20.12.15: report about the general situation by Humann.

by Ottoman Christians (in the Entente propagandists' opinion, the Ottoman Empire had become no more than a thrall of the Germans), disproved this claim.

This problem increased the sensitivities of German diplomats who cooperated with the Ottoman authorities, especially where questions of Ottoman national security were concerned. In autumn 1915 Dr. Prüfer travelled through Syria and Palestine in order to gauge the political attitudes of the population. Cemal Paşa was convinced that Arab hostility to the Ottoman Empire had become so manifest that a secret police force had become necessary to tackle the problem. Dr. Prüfer regarded Cemal's apprehensions as exaggerated; although the local Christians were completely pro-Entente they were too "cowardly" to represent any real danger. The Jewish population was either indifferent, or, if German-born, favourably inclined to the government; only a small number of individuals were ardent Zionists and consequently hostile to the Ottoman war effort. The Ottoman military successes had made the government popular with the Muslim Arabs, and only in the notable class was there still some unrest. Communication with the enemy was in any case so difficult that the risk of espionage could be discarded. Thus the creation of a special secret political police was unnecessary; the creation of local gendarmerie forces for coastal observation, able to inform the military authorities in case of an enemy landing, seemed sufficient. As an additional security measure Dr. Prüfer had also submitted a list of individuals who should be banished to the interior in case of an enemy landing, including a number of Jewish and Christian notables.<sup>82</sup>

This proposal caused ambassador Metternich considerable anguish; in case of its implementation "the tiniest indiscretion" could lead the Entente and neutral press to claim that the Germans were pressing for harsh measures. Dr. Prüfer was advised to be more cautious when advising the Ottoman authorities in the future.<sup>83</sup> Apparently it had already dawned on the Germans in late 1915 that their alliance with the Ottoman Empire might be as much a burden as a blessing in propagandistic terms, and that German and Ottoman war aims were by no means compatible in all aspects. Rather than having taken control of Turkey, as most contemporary (Entente) authors maintained, the Germans had entered into an alliance, whose fallout could grievously harm her reputation in neutral and enemy countries, with very little gain in return. From 1916 onwards German-Ottoman relations deteriorated rapidly, especially in the Ottoman army. The German officers assigned to Ottoman units as instructors or commanders often behaved undiplomatically and made no secret of their contempt for the sloth, inefficiency or outward cowardice they thought to detect in the Ottoman armed forces. While the Germans were still respected for their technical and military skills and admired as hard-working and disciplined, they were at the

<sup>82</sup> PAFO, File R21138, A37609, 05.12.15: Prüfer to Cemal Paşa.

<sup>83</sup> PAFO, File R21138, A37609, 23.12.15: Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg.

same time increasingly disliked by their Ottoman allies. Pomiankowski noted at the end of summer 1916 that the military successes of Gallipoli and Kut al-Amara, as well as the propaganda unfolded by the Ottoman government, had done much to raise Turkish national pride "beyond any reason", but this pride did not suffer German high-handedness and contempt easily.

German diplomatic personnel often made similar mistakes. While consul Loytved was praised somewhat sourly as "a true Levantine", who was able to deal very successfully with Cemal Paşa and Turkish officials in general, Consul Schabinger, the previous director of the IOfE, was criticised for his brash, loud and superior attitude, which had made him many enemies among Ottoman officials. The result of this unsatisfactory situation was far worse than that normally created by personal animosities, which altogether might not endanger the war effort. The Ottoman Empire might, through the very contact with the Central Powers, discover its sympathies for Britain and France anew. At this time many informed observers were convinced that the by end of Enver Paşa's ministry German influence in the Ottoman Empire would speedily be eradicated.<sup>84</sup>

The main problem for German propaganda in the Ottoman Empire was the difference of interests between the Germans and the Ottomans. The Germans had to accommodate Ottoman interests, as the Turkish army was the only military asset the Central Powers had in the Middle East. The independence displayed by the Ottoman government in the pursuit of its interests manifestly disproved the "enslavement" of the Ottoman Empire by Germany as Entente propagandists frequently alleged.<sup>85</sup>

The Germans based their propaganda effort on the exploitation of nationalist as well as Pan-Islamic sentiments. While the CUP had no quarrel with using Pan-Islam (in which they did not put too much hope), the fostering of nationalism was quite a different proposition. German support for the Egyptian nationalists and Egyptian independence clashed head-on with Ottoman designs, which aimed at reincorporation of Egypt as an Ottoman province into the Empire. Nationalisms in other neighbouring regions were frowned upon, too. Hikmet Bey, the Ottoman censor, remarked to German military attaché Scharfenberg in October 1916 that a propaganda article from the IOfE about Persia had been allowed to be published, as it did not directly violate Ottoman censorship laws. The article was, on the other hand "by no means commensurate with Turkish interests, as it stressed the point of Persian independence far too strongly." Scharfenberg regarded Hikmet Bey's remarks as an indicator that the

<sup>84</sup> WAV, file 47 - 1/78, Res.No.43, Bir Sab'a, 29.09.1916, Baron Latscher (Liaison Officer) to Pomiankowski.

<sup>85</sup> Morgenthau, *Secrets of the Bosphorus*, 56.

Ottoman authorities in general disliked any propaganda material that dealt with particularist interests of Persians, Georgians, Tatars, Arabs and others.<sup>86</sup>

German consul Rössler in Aleppo noted that German propaganda in the Arab provinces had failed to appreciate the complicated political and religious situation in these areas. Pan-Islamic propaganda had addressed the religious emotions of the "Muslim masses", and its success had been doubtful at best. With the executions of the Arab notables in Damascus and Beirut, the banishment of their families to Anatolia and other repressions the hostility between Arabs and Turks was worse than ever. On the other hand, the over-enthusiastic support for Pan-Islamic feelings had alienated the influential Christian population, whose leanings had always been to the Entente more than to the Central Powers. Continued Pan-Islamic propaganda could have grievous results; it did nothing to improve the fighting value of the Arab soldier (which Rössler regarded as virtually nil), but it might lead to general persecutions of Christians; the consul feared the same fate for the Greeks as for the Armenians.<sup>87</sup>

Ottoman propaganda had aimed at creating and preserving unity within the Empire, but this had been an almost impossible task. The minority groups showed strong pro-Entente leanings. Arab nationalism was perceived as a threat, and after the summer of 1916 manifested itself in a revolt which militarily was regarded as a mere nuisance but propagandistically regarded as a declaration that Turks and Arabs had little in common. Therefore the CUP during the war years set a process in motion to remove the perceived obstacles to Ottoman unity.

One of these obstacles was religion. The modernist, secularist faction within the CUP had a project at hand, which struck at the role of Islam in the Ottoman legal and social system. The modernists aimed at banishing Islam altogether from Ottoman political life; they saw Islam as totally irreconcilable with a "modern" state. It is probably for this reason that the Ottoman leadership never pursued Pan-Islamic propaganda with the same vigour as the Germans. Pan-Islam was seen as a useful propaganda tool, not an expression of a sacred, deeply-felt bond between Muslims all over the world. The modernists were pragmatic and not ideological; their aims were to gain complete independence for the Ottoman Empire, and not to create Pan-Islamic unity, which they felt was impossible to realise. The CUP congress of October 1916 gave the modernists the occasion to strike a mortal blow at the legal position of Islamic institutions in Turkey.

<sup>86</sup> PAFO, File R1526, AZ A29084, Pera, 17.10.1916: Scharfenberg to German Embassy Istanbul.

<sup>87</sup> PAFO, File R1527, AZ A31188, Aleppo, 19.10.1916: Rössler to German Embassy Istanbul.

In a propagandist sense this decision was highly dangerous. At a stroke of the pen it endangered the success of any Pan-Islamic propaganda. If the argument, that the Ottoman sultan was also caliph, had been used to attract Muslim support all over the world, which in itself had been hotly contested by Entente propagandists, now suddenly the Ottoman caliphate became confined to spiritual matters and shorn of any worldly power, which was an altogether alien concept to Muslims. The CUP showed itself hostile to organised religion, and this, combined with the discontent already existing because of the deprivations of the war, might well have tipped the scale towards revolution. In the eyes of the CUP, and in the eyes of Pomiankowski, who reported the outcome of the CUP congress to Vienna in October 1916, it was still well worth the risk. All previous attempts to modernise the Ottoman Empire, in their view, had foundered on the rocks of the role of Islam in Ottoman public life. The Tanzimat had created two different states existing parallel to each other; the capitulations had created foreign communities over which the Ottoman authorities held no sway. Now, in 1916, after the abrogation of the capitulations and the Armenian national statute and the expected abrogation of Greek Orthodox autonomy the time was ripe for the abrogation of Islamic jurisdiction. Yet the Young Turks sometimes were afraid of overstepping the limits. They did remove Islamic jurisdiction from its role in state administration. On the other hand, to appease those Ottoman Muslims who regarded this step as too radical, government decrees were issued commanding the strict observance of religious prescriptions. Conservative Ottoman senators and deputies consequently accused the CUP government of hypocrisy.<sup>88</sup>

Ottoman propaganda abroad fared equally badly. The Ottoman government had sent envoys with propaganda missions to the rulers of independent Muslim countries (such as Afghanistan) or to Muslim communities in entente colonies, mainly India, Egypt and Indonesia. The TM played an important role in these operations. The organisation sent envoys to these countries and recruited members there as well.<sup>89</sup> Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi, a member of the TM and a regular contributor to the propaganda literature produced by the IOE, appears to have been a personal envoy frequently used by Enver Paşa. In the early months of 1915 he was sent to Germany in order to conduct propaganda among the Muslim POWs in German camps; late in May Enver recalled him and charged him with a mission to Central Arabia, with the goal of reconciling Ibn Rashid and Ibn Sa'ud. Shaykh Salih's mission shows an interesting characteristic of Ottoman propaganda within the Empire. Ibn Rashid had inflicted a crushing defeat on Ibn Sa'ud in

<sup>88</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/48/2, Istanbul, 21.10.1916: Pomiankowski to Austro-Hungarian General Staff.

<sup>89</sup> Hiçyılmaz, Ergün: *Teskilat-i Mahsusa ve Casusluk Örgütleri*, 52, 119. There were at least two Indian members of the TM, Nizamettin Efendi and Ghulam Ressam Khan.

January 1915 and could not be expected to feel inclined to make peace with his rival, whom he might, for the time being, have regarded as decisively defeated. Ibn Rashid had always shown himself to be staunchly pro-Ottoman, probably more out of necessity (he was in the uncomfortable situation of being surrounded by rivals - Ibn Sa'ud in the east, Sharif Husayn of Mecca in the west and Shaykh Idris of Asir in the south-west) than of inclination, so his victory should have been highly welcome to the Ottomans. But, in the long run, the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul regarded the establishment of one strong leader in Central Arabia as highly unwelcome, as this leader might eventually threaten Ottoman control over Arabia (which was precarious) and more especially the Holy Places in the Hijaz.<sup>90</sup>

During the later years of the war popular support for the Ottoman war effort turned to war-weariness and downright hostility against the CUP and, more importantly, the Germans. The outbreak of Sharif Husayn's revolt, resulting in the loss of control over the Hijaz, and the series of military defeats the Ottomans suffered after the summer of 1916 put an end to Ottoman efforts at offensive propaganda. The loss of face suffered by the loss of Mecca was severe; the British conquest of Baghdad in March 1917 and Jerusalem in November of that year made matters worse. The Ottomans had been seen to lose, not to regain, Muslim territories; their armies were seen as on the verge of collapse.

This necessitated an Ottoman propaganda effort aimed at the Germans, who had to be convinced that their ally was still able to hold its own after the outbreak of the revolt in the Hijaz. In a masterful stroke of diversion Enver Paşa told the Germans and the Austrians that there was nothing to worry about in the Hijaz; all energies should be dedicated to prepare the second campaign against the Suez Canal, which was regarded as highly important by the Central Powers and therefore cut short any nagging enquiries. Enver stressed that it was a great sacrifice made by Turkey to delay the re-conquest of the Holy Places in favour of the Egyptian campaign, which the Ottoman minister of war claimed was mainly in the interests of the Central Powers. At the same time Enver decided to use the Ottoman press for a public condemnation of Sharif Husayn. The articles called Husayn a traitor and public enemy; they also attacked the British as "the worst enemies of Islam", who had, by supporting the rebellious Sharif, declared war on Muslims "which will continue even after the present conflict has ended." The articles concluded with the announcement that Ottoman control over the holy places could safely be expected to be re-established by the day of Kurban Bayram (October 7, 1916).<sup>91</sup>

<sup>90</sup> PAFO, File R21134, AZ A18730, Istanbul, 06.06.1915: Oppenheim to Schabinger. See also Lacey, Robert: *The Kingdom*. London 1981, 116.

<sup>91</sup> WAV, File Mb.Nr.1620/1v.1916, Istanbul, 12.08.1916, Pomiankowski to Austro-Hungarian Ministry of War.

Commander Humann described the situation in summer 1917 as bleak, and the cooperation between the Germans and the Ottomans as highly unsatisfactory. The problems originated both with the inefficiency and incompetence of the Turkish authorities and the lack of will and orientation of the Germans. The Ottoman population, Humann reported "regarded the war as a German war, and Ottoman participation in the war as serving only German needs." German support did therefore not create any gratitude, but was regarded as being inspired by German self-interest. The CUP had neglected to pay sufficient attention to the attitude of the population, which was restive and hostile.<sup>92</sup> Rumours were current that the CUP leaders had only entered the war to enrich themselves (reflecting the serious shortages of foodstuffs and fuel in Istanbul); occasionally the outcry was heard: "The day of vengeance is near!" This popular discontent badly influenced the attitude towards the Germans, as the presence of German troops was regarded as the only efficient dam to stem the revolutionary flood.<sup>93</sup> Preservation of Ottoman unity and cohesion thus became of paramount importance for the CUP government; propaganda was used to a considerable extent to foster these.

On the eve of his return to Syria after a four-week-stay in Constantinople in autumn 1916 Cemal Paşa publicly announced that Ottoman policy in Syria would be more accommodating to Arab demands than in the past. He regarded reconciliation with Sharif Husayn as of utmost importance.<sup>94</sup> Contemporary German and Austrian observers, notably Pomiankowski, agreed that Cemal Paşa's treatment of the Arab notables during 1915 and 1916 had been harsh, but justified and ultimately necessary. To regain public goodwill Cemal Paşa ordered a propaganda booklet to be published in Turkish, Arabic and French explaining and justifying the actions of the Ottoman authorities. It claimed that Arab nationalist propaganda, financed by France and Britain, had been rampant in Syria since 1908, with the intention to create a separate Arab state. Thus the individuals in question were traitors and had met the fate they deserved.

Pomiankowski and Oppenheim both disagreed with Cemal Paşa. They believed that there were too many contradictory interests among the Syrian Arab population to make concerted treacherous activity possible. Also the executions had merely fuelled the already wide-spread dissatisfaction with Ottoman rule in the Arab provinces, which was mainly based on the shortages of foodstuffs created by the war. Pomiankowski pointed out that, while the British had turned Egypt into "a blossoming country", Syria and Palestine were "neglected, squalid and impoverished." Consequently even "the most pious

<sup>92</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.410, Istanbul, 18.08.1917: Humann to German Admiralty.

<sup>93</sup> FA/MA, File RM40/V.412, Istanbul, 12.09.1917: Humann to German Admiralty.

<sup>94</sup> Cemal did indeed eventually offer peace to Sharif Husayn in November 1917. See Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 253ff.



Muslim Arab would prefer Christian British rule to the rule of the incompetent Turks."

Pomiankowski's statement correctly identified the poor economic conditions of Syria as one of the central reasons for Arab dissent. Requisitions, which were only paid in paper money, if at all, had brought the Druze grain farmers to the edge of rebellion in the Hawran. Memories of the famine of 1915 and 1916 were still vivid and made the population disinclined to part with foodstuffs. Deserters had become a scourge of the countryside; some 80,000 men had deserted since the outbreak of war and almost to a man become brigands. The Ottoman gendarmerie could not be relied upon to control the brigandage, as the gendarmes often sympathised with the robbers. Anatolian troops, sorely needed in other areas, had to be used and put an additional strain on the food supplies.<sup>95</sup>

By this time the Ottomans were already losing their military credentials. Baghdad fell in March 1917, and the Ottoman fronts in Syria showed first signs of disintegration. The loss of the Arab provinces was, in military terms, not necessarily a negative development as far as the Germans and the Austrians were concerned; it would reduce the strains of defence on the Ottoman army considerably. Yet it meant a propaganda disaster and the end of the Ottoman Empire as an Empire; what remained was Turkish-dominated Anatolia.<sup>96</sup>

Yet in the two years of war before the Ottoman fronts began to disintegrate the Germans and the Ottomans had conducted propaganda vigorously, not only through written material, but also through propaganda envoys. It was almost ironical that the last of these missions, that of Major von Stotzingen, had to be recalled from the Hijaz due to the outbreak of the Arab revolt. Although Sharif Husayn's revolt turned out both militarily and propagandistically disappointing for the British, it nevertheless represented an embarrassing failure of the German-Ottoman Pan-Islamic propaganda. The loss of Islamic credentials suffered by the Ottomans through losing control of the Hijaz and one of the holy places made the success of further propaganda operations after 1916 impossible.

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<sup>95</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/7, Res.No.33, Istanbul, 06.01.1917: Pomiankowski to Austro-Hungarian Ministry of War.

<sup>96</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/23, Res.No.769, Istanbul, 03.03.1917: Pomiankowski to Austro-Hungarian Ministry of War.

## **Chapter 5: German and Ottoman Propaganda - Case Studies**

### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with a selected number of case studies describing the experiences of German and Ottoman propaganda agents in the Middle East. The cases here investigated only represent about half of the German propaganda missions which were sent out during the First World War. Several expeditions have been omitted, such as the expedition of Oskar Ritter von Niedermayer and Werner Otto von Hentig to Persia and Afghanistan, the activities of former German consul Wilhelm Wassmuss in southern Persia and the mission of Major Friedrich Klein to the Shi'ite mujtahids of Najaf and Karbala. These cases have already been dealt with in scholarly monographs.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, they mostly took place in areas beyond the focus of this study, and also are, as far as reasons for their failure are concerned, not as representative as the cases here investigated.

German and Ottoman propaganda agents often found their efforts frustrated by the inability or unwillingness of the German or Ottoman government to deliver more than words, namely funds and weapons. The majority of these case studies are concerned with German propaganda operations, as the Germans were far more active in the propagandist field, had higher expectations and usually failed ignominiously. In contrast the Ottomans were more pragmatic and moderate in their expectations and therefore managed to achieve at least partial success.

The Germans and the Ottomans, like the British, used propaganda both for offensive and defensive purposes. Offensive propaganda was used to incite civilian populations to rebel against their masters. Defensive propaganda aimed at keeping Muslim populations quiet in the Entente colonies and to preserve internal cohesion and support for the war effort in the Ottoman Empire. While defensive propaganda worked more or less satisfactorily during the First World War, offensive propaganda - especially German offensive propaganda - produced only disappointing results.

The failures of German propaganda were occasioned by a number of factors which also prevented their intelligence missions from succeeding. First, German propaganda operations were often regarded with suspicion by the Ottomans, both out of religious or political considerations. The German propaganda agents thus suffered from the inherent shortcoming of the German-Ottoman alliance - conflicting interests between the two involved parties.

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<sup>1</sup> Vogel, Renate: *Die Persien- und Afghanistan-Expedition Oskar Ritter von Niedermayers*. Osnabrück 1976; Sykes, Christopher: *Wassmuss, the German Lawrence*. London, New York 1936; Ende, Werner: "Iraq in WWI - The Germans, the Turks and the Shi'ite Mujtahids' Call for Jihad", in Peters, Rudolf (ed.): *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*. Leiden 1981.

Second, with very few exceptions, the Germans and Ottomans were unable to augment their propaganda with what really counted - military force, arms and money - and hoped to manufacture support purely by force of words. They strongly overrated the appeal of Pan-Islam for Muslims both within and without the Ottoman Empire and had to learn the hard way that local leaders acted predominantly out of pragmatic, not ideological considerations. The exaggerated expectations of the British from the adoption of other ideologies - Arab nationalism - also were ultimately frustrated.

### A Muslim in Disguise - Max Roloff

Strengthening Ottoman cohesion was a fairly simple task compared to the far more ambitious goal of inciting rebellions in the Entente Muslim colonies. Entente censorship was strict and represented a formidable obstacle for German propaganda. The best opportunity to convey propaganda messages to enemy colonies was therefore to target pilgrims in the Hijaz during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, which terminated at the end of October 1914. To use this opportunity the Germans decided to send a propaganda agent in the disguise of a Muslim pilgrim to Mecca at the end of September 1914. There were some pitfalls in this project. First, the agent had to preserve his cover identity at all times without fail. Second, the existence of the agent had to be kept secret from the Ottomans, who would of course not have permitted a German non-Muslim to travel to the Holy Places, out of apprehension that Muslim opinion would be outraged if the German "Muslim" should be uncovered. This would seriously endanger the newly proclaimed Pan-Islamic orientation of the CUP. Ottoman apprehensions were not without foundations. In later years Entente propagandists and Sharif Husayn frequently referred to the presence of German "infidels" in the Hijaz as proof for the invalidity of the CUP's Islamic credentials.

Several volunteers offered to undertake the mission. The German authorities eventually decided to entrust the mission to the traveller Max Roloff. He had spent considerable time in Arabia and the Dutch East Indies and thus intended to make the pilgrimage in the disguise of a Muslim of south-Arabian descent, resident in the Dutch East Indies. Roloff's initial itinerary included a direct journey from the East Indies to Jiddah, where he aimed to influence Egyptian, Tunisian, Moroccan, Indian and Chinese Muslims with the aid of local "pilgrimage agents." From Jiddah Roloff planned to proceed to Riyadh to agitate among the Shammar and to send messages to Kuwait and Basrah. This plan was approved by commander Humann, who supervised Roloff's journey jointly with section IIIb.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> PAFO, File R21124, A22531, Berlin, 17.09.1914: Humann to Foreign Office.

Shortage of time forced Roloff to alter his itinerary. He travelled to Mecca via Port Said, Istanbul, Damascus and 'Aqaba.<sup>3</sup> His travelling companion and servant was a Malay Muslim steward from the Dutch steamer which had brought Roloff to Port Said. According to Roloff this man was extremely useful in making contacts with influential Muslims during his "pilgrimage." Roloff met the Shaykh ʿl-Islam in Istanbul and made some Ottoman journalists publish pro-German articles. In Syria Roloff observed that the locals had almost no knowledge of Germany due to the Germans having neglected the Arabs in favour of the Turks before the war; to redress this he proposed the founding of more German schools. He arrived in Mecca on October 23, 1914.<sup>4</sup>

Roloff's agitation focused on countering British propaganda, which had insinuated that Germany was responsible for the obstacles put in the ways of the Indian pilgrims (in truth a British security measure, which aimed to prevent thousands of British-Indian subjects from travelling to the Holy Places which might soon become enemy territory). The British had claimed that every Indian pilgrim captured by the Germans or the Ottomans in the Hijaz would be forced to join the Ottoman army, and had spread the news in Egypt that Turkey had surrendered the Holy Places to Germany, the "enemy of Islam."<sup>5</sup> Roloff regularly invited Muslim clerics and fellow pilgrims for meals. During these meetings he then proceeded to discuss the British statements and attempted to convince his guests that they were pure inventions. On the other hand, Roloff tried to avoid being seen too much in public, out of fear that he might be uncovered, and had therefore no possibility to address larger groups. He had little difficulty to convince the Indian 'ulama of the falsity of these accusations and to attract their sympathy for Germany. This did not necessarily also mean sympathy with the Ottomans and the CUP. As a reason for this mistrust Roloff correctly pointed out that the CUP "had sinned too much in the past" and could not rebuild its Islamic credentials within a couple of weeks.<sup>6</sup> Indeed it was not surprising that Muslims sympathised with the Germans, who fought their colonial overlords. However such sympathy cost the Muslims nothing - Germany had no means of forcing Muslims to do - or not to do - anything against their will. The Young Turks, who had reduced the sultan-caliph to little more than a puppet, were a different proposition, both for Muslims within and without the Empire. By stripping the sultan-caliph of most of his power the CUP had made it harder for the Ottoman government to win over the support of world Islam.

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<sup>3</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A8790, 08.01.1915: Max Roloff: Report concerning my journey to Arabia [hereafter Roloff], 1.

<sup>4</sup> Roloff, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Roloff, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Roloff, 5.

British security measures had reduced the number of pilgrims in 1914 from the usual 100,000 to 32,000, thus depriving the pilgrimage agents in the Hijaz of a sizeable portion of their income. The agents therefore were incensed and willing to cooperate with Roloff. They did their best to preach the jihad, supported by Turkish 'ulama, but met with only limited success. The lukewarm response of the Muslims was based both on the doubtful Islamic credentials of the CUP, and on the strange wording of the proclamation of jihad - a "selective" jihad only against Britain, France and Russia instead of against all infidels - was a complete novelty. In any case Roloff believed that rebellions in the Entente colonies would only break out after Britain had suffered defeats in Europe and particularly in Egypt; rebellions could not "be manufactured from Istanbul."<sup>7</sup> If Enver had the charisma as and looks of the Mahdi matters might be different, but Enver was not popular with the Syrians or Arabs and unknown in India.<sup>8</sup> Roloff believed that propaganda had the best chance of success when targeting the Sanusiya, the Wahhabis and Imam Yahya of Yemen, who appeared to have fallen out with the British. Another promising target was the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood, which had excellent contacts all over Central Asia and Afghanistan and could foster rebellions in India.<sup>9</sup>

A great problem was the antipathy between Turks and Arabs, which Roloff thought impossible to overcome speedily. He regarded this antipathy as an inner-Ottoman problem which the Germans would be well advised to steer clear of. The attitude of the Arabs strongly depended on the Ottoman military performance, and Germany had already missed the opportunity to court Arab favour with more generous bribes than those offered by the British. Roloff was convinced of Sharif Husayn's being on the British payroll, and believed that "the best thing the Ottomans could do was to hang him publicly or have him discreetly removed."<sup>10</sup>

Roloff returned from Mecca via Tunis and Palermo. He decided to refrain from propaganda activities in Tunis, as the North African Muslims hated the Italians far more than the French, and German propaganda might well endanger the German-Italian alliance. This problem was to burden German propaganda until summer 1915, when Italy "conveniently" joined the war on the Entente side.<sup>11</sup>

In his conclusion Roloff judged the situation soberly and with some accuracy; success of the jihad depended on Ottoman military successes; this applied particularly to Arabia, where it was still utterly undecided "if Turk or Briton should emerge as the final victors." Pan-Islam, on the other hand,

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<sup>7</sup> Roloff, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Roloff, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Roloff, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Roloff, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Roloff, 13.

appeared to have killed the Arab national idea and might further be employed to strengthen the "national coherence" of the Ottoman Empire yet such feelings had to be exploited before they evaporated.<sup>12</sup>

### Organising Propaganda in the Ottoman Empire - Dr. Prüfer and Max von Oppenheim

Roloff's observations sounded fairly encouraging for the German propagandists, but one of the best-informed German observers of the situation in Syria and Palestine at the time, Dr. Prüfer, saw less reason to be optimistic. Prüfer clearly saw the link between knowledge of local conditions and effective propaganda. In October 1914 he set out on a mission to the Arab provinces to survey the local situation.

His findings were not very encouraging. Local Muslim opinion had remained fairly unaffected by the outbreak of war and the proclamation of jihad. It was sympathetic to the Germans, as "it was felt that a German victory would mean a revival of Islam and a German defeat a weakening or even the destruction of the caliphate."<sup>13</sup> Yet the predominant attitude was that the war would damage the local economy, an attitude reinforced by "unnecessarily severe and arbitrary requisitions and recruitment." There also was fear of a British or French occupation. On the positive side the idea of Ottoman unity had become remarkably stronger; the Syrians were apparently impressed by the tough and determined actions taken by their government, "which they had not any longer deemed capable of such actions."<sup>14</sup> Dr. Prüfer's assumption that "nothing impresses the Arab as much as the ruthless exertion of brute force" may however be contested.<sup>15</sup> The local government agencies had yet to influence local opinion, which Prüfer also regarded as a reason for the lack of enthusiasm for the war. Thus the vali of Damascus had remained completely inactive, propaganda in Syria was only carried out by the *Agence Ottomane* and the military authorities. A great problem was the scarcity of available mass media. Damascus had only one newspaper, *Al-Muhajir*, edited by an Algerian refugee. To solve this problem Dr. Prüfer entered into negotiations with several newspaper proprietors and convinced them to shift their headquarters from Beirut to Damascus in exchange for German financial subsidies.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Prüfer also gave a reason for the local authorities' hostility against Pan-Islamic propaganda; they feared possible massacres of the Christian

<sup>12</sup> Roloff, 15.

<sup>13</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A32932, Damascus, 03.11.1914: Report by Dr. Prüfer concerning popular attitudes in Syria and the preparations for the Suez-Canal campaign [hereafter Prüfer], 1.

<sup>14</sup> Prüfer, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Prüfer, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Prüfer, 3.

population. He proposed to exploit Pan-Islam nevertheless, as this might serve to keep Britain and France from bombarding the undefended coastal cities, and to prohibit rebellions of the Christian population sympathising with the Entente.<sup>17</sup>

While Pan-Islamic propaganda was still badly organised in Syria a fervent effort had been made to radicalise Egyptian Muslim opinion. Several thousand revolutionary leaflets had been despatched, either directly by Egyptians or via Mecca. Two Egyptian agents, Bushir al-Liwa and Kazim Efendi, formerly inspector of the Egyptian police, had been sent to Egypt; they were to be reinforced by Eşref Kuşubaşı and 60 "Komitacis" and a group of Syrian bandits, who were expected to cross the Suez Canal once the main advance had begun.<sup>18</sup> Dr. Prüfer was highly doubtful about their chances of success. While the Egyptians were pro-German and pro-Ottoman they had not shown any inclination to active participation in the struggle against the British. He ascribed this partly to the lack of leadership, as the nationalist party appeared to be disorganised, and partly to the "cowardly character of the Egyptian people." Rebellions in Egypt were only likely once the Ottoman army was entering the country in force.<sup>19</sup>

During the first few months of 1915 things took a turn for the worse and necessitated a less aggressive orientation of German propaganda strategy. Rather than inciting the Muslims to join the jihad the Germans felt it necessary to preserve coherence within the Ottoman Empire. They also had to confront the suspicion of the Ottoman military and civilian administrations for the first - but by no means last - time.<sup>20</sup> The Ottomans suspected the Germans of carrying out propaganda missions without their permission and against their interests. Frictions between Ottomans and Germans were the result of conflicting strategy as well as of personal differences. Many German officers serving in the Ottoman army turned out to be rude, authoritarian and undisciplined individuals, who were thoroughly unsuited to deal with Turkish subalterns. These officers usually had to rely on interpreters, who were often incensed against their employers out of resentment against real or alleged ill-treatment, and thus did their bit to prevent harmonious cooperation between German officers and Ottoman troops. Matters could be even worse, as in the case of a German colonel reinforcing his orders by beating subaltern Turkish officers from the rank of major downwards with his riding-crop. As a report from German consul Dr. Padel in Damascus in March 1915 indicated, alcoholism also could be a source of trouble.<sup>21</sup> Such worrying news impressed the need on the

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<sup>17</sup> Prüfer, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Prüfer, 6 - 7.

<sup>19</sup> Prüfer, 8.

<sup>20</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A24468, Damascus, 12.12.1914: Prüfer to Foreign Office / Oppenheim via Wangenheim.

<sup>21</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A11083, Damascus, 03.03.15: Padel to Wangenheim.

Germans to exert greater care in the selection of personnel to serve in the Middle East, although friction between German and Ottoman civilian and military personnel was rather the rule than the exemption during the entire war years. These frictions greatly reduced German prestige in Ottoman eyes, thus counteracting the German propaganda effort. For German propaganda in the Ottoman Empire to be successful both Dr. Prüfer and Oppenheim realised the necessity of a reorganisation and reorientation of the German propaganda effort in the Ottoman Empire.

In early 1915 Oppenheim began to prepare his journey to Syria and Palestine. The baron's correspondence with the Foreign Office indicated that he saw his propaganda activity more as a possibility to gain fame and reputation than a serious necessity of modern warfare. Oppenheim wished to maintain the greatest possible amount of independence for himself and therefore kept his entourage small, possibly to avoid having to deal with other persons from the Foreign Office who might wish to control his actions. The expedition was to consist of Oppenheim himself, his former secretary Mr. Kindle,<sup>22</sup> Dr. Prüfer, dragoman Mr. Diehl and Sadiq Bey, a former Ottoman police officer then working among the Muslim POWs in Berlin. Oppenheim pointed out that with the help of these individuals he would not need any indigenous Christian interpreters, whom the baron regarded as politically unreliable.<sup>23</sup>

The aim of the mission was the creation of a regular propaganda service (after consultation with the German authorities in Constantinople and Damascus, Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi and Enver Paşa), the establishment of an organisation of newsrooms all over the Ottoman Empire, and the attempt to receive and communicate information to and from Egypt, the Sudan, Abyssinia, Persia, Afghanistan, India and the Caucasus. Oppenheim also intended to contact the members of previously despatched German expeditions to Iraq, Persia and the Hijaz. The baron also expressed his desire to establish friendly relations with influential individuals in Syria and Palestine, and to court the local press. For a mission of this kind, which combined professional and social activities, Oppenheim could with some reason claim to be the ideal candidate. The baron justified the fairly large sum of half a million marks for the expedition with the great benefits to be reaped from countering Entente propaganda, especially if (which at that time seemed more than possible) the British and French fleets were to succeed in forcing the Dardanelles.<sup>24</sup>

Oppenheim regarded propaganda in the Middle East as his personal territory and fervently tried to keep other German institutions out of the region. In September 1915 he asked the Foreign Office to abstain from propaganda

<sup>22</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A9005, Berlin, 12.03.15: Oppenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>23</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A10589, Berlin, 23.03.1915; AZ A10669, Berlin, 23.03.15: Oppenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>24</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A9166, Berlin, 12.03.1915: Oppenheim to Foreign Office.



activities aside from those agreed between himself and Sharif Husayn of Mecca. He claimed that the Sharif's propaganda produced good results and that a diversification of propaganda sources and agents could only lead to confusion. This was also the view of Cemal Paşa. The Indian Independence Committee in Berlin had proposed to send an Indian Muslim agent to the Hijaz; yet Oppenheim believed the agent, Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahim, to be unsuitable for the mission. Cemal Paşa even went to the lengths to threaten expulsion of any Indian propaganda agent he might find in the Hijaz. On the other hand, the Indians were welcome to accompany the second expeditionary force on their march to Egypt.<sup>25</sup> Cemal Paşa justified the harsh measures against the Indians not only with the undesirability of independent propaganda agents in the Hijaz, but with the conviction that most Indian pilgrims probably were British spies.<sup>26</sup>

Oppenheim managed to preserve his freedom of action quite successfully during the entire duration of the war, if necessary by disobeying direct orders from the Foreign Office if he felt these orders were damaging for the German propaganda effort or prohibited its being profitable for German interests. Oppenheim's propaganda apparatus indeed matured into an impressive undertaking during 1915. The newsroom organisation now covered the entire Empire and was planned to be extended to Persia and Bulgaria. Several provincial newspapers had been founded with German material and financial assistance. There also were plans to set up a network for film propaganda, which Enver and Cemal Paşa had promised to support. In the future, Oppenheim proposed, German propaganda also could foster German economic activity in the region.<sup>27</sup> While these achievements were impressive, Oppenheim never managed to monopolise German propaganda in the Near and Middle East completely. In fact from late 1915 onwards Oppenheim increasingly became an "eminence grise" in the German propaganda apparatus, a powerful influence on German propaganda in the Ottoman Empire, but not an active field agent any more.

### Propaganda in the Sudan and Tripolitania

The German propagandists regarded Sudan and Tripolitania as important areas to be targeted, mainly due to their geographical proximity to Egypt, which beyond any doubt represented one of the main targets of German and Ottoman military and propagandist operations. But the British were in firm control of Egypt and could not be dislodged by military operations alone. Efforts to incite rebellions of the Egyptian populace against the British in the early months of the war had proved a failure (and continued to be unsuccessful throughout the war).

<sup>25</sup> PAFO, File R21136, AZ A28667, Pera, 25.09.1915: Oppenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>26</sup> PAFO, File R21137, AZ A31391, Pera, 23.10.1915: Neurath to Foreign Office.

<sup>27</sup> PAFO, File R21137, AZ A33761, Pera, 10.11.1915: Oppenheim to Foreign Office.

Thus it seemed vital to gain allies in Libya, namely the Sanusiya, and the Sudan. Problematic was the strong Italian presence in both territories. Pan-Islamic propaganda might stir up local populations against any sort of colonial control (including Italian rule), and thus represented a potential risk of Italy abandoning her neutrality, which the Germans regarded as vital out of consideration for Austria-Hungary.

### Propaganda in the Sudan

Some tentative German propaganda missions to Abyssinia, Eritrea and the Sudan were sent out in late 1914 and failed ignominiously. In September 1914 professor Leo Frobenius, a famous German specialist on African history and archaeology, travelled to Eritrea in order to distribute propaganda material among local Muslims; he did so in such a boisterous and blatantly indiscreet manner that the Italian authorities had him deported on grounds of his activities violating Italian neutrality.

Professor Moritz, former director of the Khedivial library in Cairo, set out on a propaganda mission to the Sudan in October 1914. He planned to cross the Red Sea from the Hijaz after setting up a relay station for news coming from and going to the Sudan in Jiddah. During his journey Moritz found the Turkish propaganda effort in the Hijaz impressive; it appeared to be efficient and successful.<sup>28</sup> His own mission failed to reach the Sudan and returned to Damascus at the beginning of January 1915. Moritz reported in detail the reasons for his unexpectedly early return, probably to defend himself against accusations of cowardice or neglect of duty. He claimed to have returned only after achieving the task which Kress had set him. Moritz had made direct contacts with pilgrims in the Hijaz and distributed propaganda leaflets and pictures among Ottoman officers, officials and pilgrims, even a couple of Indians who were just preparing to return to India on Japanese vessels. Propaganda material had also been sent to the harbours of Lit, Qunfuda and Hudayda in southern Arabia.

Moritz claimed that his main task had not been to instigate rebellions in the Sudan, but to prohibit the British from using Sudanese troops in the defence of the Suez Canal. To this end the professor had recruited a number of pilgrims as propaganda agents. They included a former officer of a Sudanese battalion, a bedouin from the Hadendowah tribe, and a number of pilgrims from Darfur and Somalia. At least the first two agents had managed to arrive at their destination. Most of the propaganda material Moritz had received from the consulate in Damascus had had to be destroyed, as it was too bulky to be taken along by the agents. Still Moritz claimed that his mission had been successful, as no Sudanese troops had so far been located among the Canal defence forces.

<sup>28</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A33830, Pera, 30.11.1914: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

Therefore Moritz had felt it justified to return to Damascus.<sup>29</sup> He claimed to have only narrowly escaped an attempt on his life which Faysal had staged in al-Rabigh.<sup>30</sup> Moritz probably felt his explanation to be rather lame; he only sent the report to Berlin after some heated exchanges with consul Loytved-Hardegg in Damascus. Personal relations among the Germans in the Ottoman Empire obviously were not always cordial, even to the point of endangering the propaganda effort.<sup>31</sup>

Moritz's journey still had brought some positive results. He was the first one to warn the Germans of Sharif Husayn's duplicity, and of the weakness of Ottoman control over the province. He also had found a possible remedy; if the Ottomans were to take swift action they could rely on the support of an anti-Sharifian party in the Hijaz, which consisted mainly of those who had suffered from Sharif Husayn's sometimes fairly tyrannical rule. Moritz also had consulted Vehip Paşa, the governor of the Hijaz, and reported his proposals for strengthening Ottoman control of the province, which consisted of improvements to the lines of communications and to the supply of foodstuffs from Syria, replacing those which the British continuously threatened to cut off. Such action could be expected to yield good results. While increasing the tensions between the Ottomans and Sharif Husayn, the outbreak of war had improved relations between the local authorities and the Ottoman government. British propaganda, which claimed that the British were friends of the Arabs, had fallen on deaf ears. Yet Moritz also corroborated Roloff's warning that "the attitude of the western Arabian population will be strongly influenced by the outcome of the Suez Canal campaign."<sup>32</sup>

Moritz's or, more precisely Vehip Paşa's, proposals might, if implemented, have resulted in the retention of Ottoman control in the Hijaz. The problem was that they were only forwarded to the German Foreign Office, which had no direct power in the Ottoman Empire and was anxious to avoid entanglement in any affairs concerning the holy places. Thus the proposals failed to produce a reaction.

In all likelihood both the German general staff and the Foreign Office regarded the results of Frobenius' and Moritz's missions as disappointing. They temporarily planned to have the German embassy in Addis Ababa carry out propaganda work and even recruited an Italian to serve as messenger in Milan. Yet the appearance of Carl Neufeld, who seemed much better qualified, made this rather desperate scheme obsolete.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> PAFO, File R21128, AZ A6227, Damascus, 13.01.1915: Moritz to Loytved-Hardegg.

<sup>30</sup> PAFO, File R21128, AZ A6228, Damascus, 08.01.1915: Moritz to Foreign Office.

<sup>31</sup> PAFO, File R21128, AZ A6227, Damascus, 14.01.1915: Loytved-Hardegg to Bethmann Hollweg.

<sup>32</sup> PAFO, File R21128, AZ A6229, Damascus, 16.01.1915: Moritz to Foreign Office.

<sup>33</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A12246, Berlin, 07.04.1915: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

## Propaganda in Tripolitania

In the first eighteen months after the outbreak of war both the Germans and the Ottomans concentrated their efforts mostly on Tripolitania in order to gain the support of the Sanusiya, which had proved a tough and determined opponent of the Italians during and after the war of 1911. Another reason probably was Enver Paşa's experiences in the Tripolitanian war.

In Tripolitania the problem of the "selective jihad" was most pronounced. German and Ottoman propaganda had to aim both at reconciling the Sanusiya with the Italians and at making it attack Egypt. The risk of alienating Italy, causing it to terminate its neutrality, was considerable, as count Pallavicini, Austrian-Hungarian ambassador in Istanbul, had informed German secretary of state von Jagow. Jagow was not convinced. He believed that rather than creating a community of interests between Italy, France and Britain, Pan-Islamic propaganda in North Africa would force the Italians to stay close to the Central Powers, who were at the time being the favourites of the Muslims of the world. Only then could Italy hope to keep Libya free from the "Islamic Movement."<sup>34</sup> In December 1914, several German envoys were active among the adherents of the Sanusiya and tribal leaders in the far west of Tripolitania. The most important of them was Dr. Otto Mannesmann, who had been stirring up the tribes in the west of Tripolitania since September. Mannesmann claimed that his activities had been successful. The tribes in south-western Algeria, southern Tunisia and Morocco were up in arms, and asked urgently for more arms and ammunition to be sent from Germany. Due to obstacles put in the way of German propaganda by the local Italian authorities, the situation in Tripolitania was, however, less positive. Influential local notables had been harassed or even jailed after contacts with the Germans, forcing Mannesmann to conduct his meetings in secret. There were, however, signs that the Italian attitude was going to change; lieutenant-colonel Garroni, head of the military-political section of the Italian Army in Libya, had recently offered Mannesmann freedom of movement in the hinterland in exchange for his help to keep the tribes quiet. While Italian official opinion still resented German agents in the country, Garroni had made his offer from the conviction that Mannesmann's activities could be beneficial by concentrating the hostility of the Tripolitanians against the French or British. On the other hand Mannesmann was instructed to stay out of Tunis, as this could cause the fighting to spill over into western Tripolitania. Should Mannesmann contact the Tunisian rebels, Garroni threatened to lodge an official complaint in Rome.

Garroni believed the continued hostility of Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif against the Italians was due to the latter's stubborn disregard of the Sultan's wish

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<sup>34</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A22622, General Headquarters, 15.09.1914: von Jagow to Flotow.

for peace and cooperation with Italy. As far as Italy was concerned, reminding him of that wish therefore could not do any harm. Yet Garroni was also convinced that Sayyid Ahmad would not take up arms against the British, who had often supported him in the past and still supplied the Sanusiya with much-needed foodstuffs. Much more important, they did not infringe upon his sovereignty, in contrast with the Ottomans, of whose designs Sayyid Ahmad was reported to be deeply suspicious.

Mannesmann repeatedly stressed the need for discretion in German propaganda activities. Italian public opinion could be stirred up against the Central Powers too easily if the propaganda appeared to be directed against Italian interests. One of Mannesmann's letters to Sayyid Ahmad had already fallen into the wrong hands. While the Italians had ignored this incident they had sentenced a German trader in Tripoli, who had been found in possession of a cache of weapons "from before the 1911 war", to one year's imprisonment on a charge of gun-running, showing how tense Italian nerves were.<sup>35</sup>

Mannesmann sincerely endeavoured to preserve the fragile peace between the Italians and the Sanusiya and to direct the latter's aggression against the British in Egypt. In November 1914 a propaganda leaflet with the same aim had been issued by the German Colonial Office. In the leaflet the Italians were not named directly in order to avoid difficulties for the Italian government, which might be accused by the Entente states to have endorsed the propaganda. Mannesmann was to arrange for this leaflet to be distributed in the interior of Tunisia, Algeria and the Sudan, not in Tripolitania itself.<sup>36</sup>

In December 1914 Mannesmann sent a letter to Shaykh Ahmad al-Sharif offering him friendship in the name of the German emperor. The Emperor had "just won great victories over his enemies", along with the sultan of Turkey, "the noble ally of Germany." Yet Egypt, which the British - the true enemies of Islam - had only managed to occupy by lying, treason and the exploit of internal rivalries, still suffered under foreign oppression. India and Iran were in the same predicament. Britain was pressing Italy to declare war against Germany and Islam, but as Italy was a friend of Turkey and Germany it had so far abstained from doing so. Italy would preserve the peace as long as the inhabitants of Tripolitania abstained from hostile actions. Both the German emperor and the sultan of Turkey implored Sharif Ahmad to make peace with the Italians and to concentrate his powers on the conquest of Egypt. He should make his desire for peace clear by writing to the Italian government; the German emperor, the sultan of Turkey, and the 300 million Muslims of the world, "whose fate Sharif Ahmad now controlled", would appreciate this gesture and be most grateful.

<sup>35</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A36437, Tripolis, 16.12.1914: Dr. Otto Mannesmann to Foreign Office.

<sup>36</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A32519, Berlin, 27.11.1914: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

Sayyid Ahmad was asked to convey his decisions to Mannesmann, who in turn would forward them to the German emperor.<sup>37</sup>

This letter represents a good example of the mix of shrewdness and naiveté which was typical of German propaganda in the Middle East. Sayyid Ahmad was asked to make peace with the Italians, involve his troops in an attack on Egypt (while he had never had any quarrel with the British) and facilitate the Ottoman conquest of the country. Nothing was, on the other hand, offered in return - success of the propaganda mission was, under these circumstances, most unlikely.

Wangenheim in Istanbul was clearly aware of these faults; he also declared himself opposed to the use of German agents when Muslim envoys could be expected to fare much better. In spite of Wangenheim's opposition the Germans decided at the end of December to send another agent to Tripolitania: Dr. Alfred Tilger, who had been German consul in Tripoli before the war.<sup>38</sup> He was to be accompanied by the geographer Paul Borchardt, who had spent considerable time in Tripolitania and Egypt and was well acquainted with the country and with the Sanusiya.<sup>39</sup>

Tilger was to work for a peace treaty between the Sanusiya and the Italians, thus allaying Italian suspicions against German-Ottoman propaganda in the country. He also was to stir up the tribes in the interior of Tunisia and Algeria against the British and the French, probably in cooperation with the Ottoman envoys Halid Corum Bey and Sami Bey, and to arrange for the import of weapons for arming the tribes. Tilger himself was cautious about the potential successes of his mission, unless the Italians fully cooperated and pressed for diplomatic preparations in Rome.<sup>40</sup> Tilger's objections led to his instruction being slightly changed. Quietening Italian suspicions, rather than aggressive propaganda, was now the main aim.<sup>41</sup>

The Italians were loath to cooperate. They conceded that German and Ottoman activities were not directed against their interests, but feared the increase of brigandage in Libya as result of Pan-Islamic agitation. Consequently the Germans were asked to recall Dr. Mannesmann; Dr. Tilger, whom they offered passage to Tripoli on an Italian vessel, was advised not to exceed his consular duties while serving in the country. Such recalcitrance bode ill for the success of German propaganda in Tripolitania.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A36437, Tripoli, 16.12.1914: Mannesmann to Foreign Office.

<sup>38</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A36131, Pera, 18.12.1914: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>39</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A34701, Berlin, 14.12.1914: Wesendonk to Foreign Office. Borchardt submitted a detailed report on the Sanusiya and on possible routes for the invasion of Egypt, which he had travelled on before the war.

<sup>40</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A35495, Berlin, 20.12.1914: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

<sup>41</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A35832, Berlin, 22.12.1914: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>42</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A565, Rome, 05.01.1915: Bülow to Foreign Office.

Things took a turn for the better in early January 1915. The German agents had been allowed to stay in Tripolitania and Italian suspicions, Mannesmann reported, seemed to be a thing of the past. The Italians even seemed to be inclined to use the German agents for their own purposes; Garroni had approached Mannesmann and asked for assistance in the negotiation of a peace treaty with the Ottoman senator Sulayman al-Baruni, who at that time was at the headquarters of the Sanusiya. On the negative side there was as yet no sign of a Sanusiya attack on Egypt. Also Sayyid Ahmad had made peace with the French in Wadai. The British were targeting the Sanusiya leader with their own propaganda, which proposed the reestablishment of an Arab caliphate and even offered the honour to Sayyid Ahmad. Relations between Sayyid Ahmad and the Ottomans were strained; 50 Ottoman officers leading Sanusiya troops were continuously spied upon and very limited in their freedom of movement. The simple reason for this suspicious attitude was Sayyid Ahmad's fear of Ottoman infringement on his sovereignty. He was prepared to recognise sultan Mehmed V Reshat as caliph, but wanted otherwise to be regarded as an independent ruler. While neither the Ottomans nor the Sanusiya were particularly interested in peace with Italy, Sayyid Ahmad's desire to get control of a harbour, possibly al-Salum in the extreme west of Egypt, gave the Germans the means to strike a deal. If they were prepared to support Sayyid Ahmad's ambition he might accept a peace treaty with the Italians, in which the boundaries between Italian and Sanusiya-controlled territories would be clearly outlined.<sup>43</sup>

At the end of January 1915 Dr. Mannesmann reported about the ongoing negotiations. The German attitude had changed to one of pragmatism; they were prepared to enter into a preliminary agreement with Sayyid Ahmad, even if some issues were not resolved satisfactorily. The advantage of this course was that sensitive issues could be avoided for the time being. The agreement was only between Sayyid Ahmad and Germany, thus the question of recognition of sultan Mehmed V Reshat as caliph could be avoided. Also, the preliminary nature of the deal offered the Sanusiya the possibility to get better terms when a proper peace treaty was to be signed with the Italians. If the Italians were to remain obstinate, Germany offered to guarantee an addition to Sanusiya territories in the Sudan, and also to support Sayyid Ahmad with instructors, engineers, weapons and the materials for the construction of fortresses and harbours - which indicated that the Germans planned to use Tripolitania as a basis in the future. Germany was also supposed to guarantee freedom of religion for Muslims in Algeria and Morocco - an academic promise, as Germany did not control these areas and consequently could not fulfil her obligation.<sup>44</sup>

Propaganda in Tripolitania gained in importance after the first unsuccessful attempt to cross the Suez Canal in February 1915. The logistical

<sup>43</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A2102, Tripolis, 06.01.1915: Mannesmann to Foreign Office.

<sup>44</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A3097/3109: Rome, 21.01.1915: Mannesmann to Foreign Office.

problems in transporting sufficient military forces across the Sinai desert made Sanusiya cooperation vital for a successful second campaign. To be of assistance the Sanusiya had to be supplied with additional weapons, which Mannesmann proposed to smuggle into Tripolitania from a base on the Greek island of Gavdos (ca. 50 km south of Crete). Mannesmann intended to adopt the disguise of a German American, Gustave E. Boker. Eventually both the base on Gavdos (a disused copper mine) and a coal dump some 30 km from Chania on Crete were to be put under the control of a real German-American director with perfect knowledge of English and an authentic American passport. Thus Mannesmann's credentials with the American authorities in Athens could be established, and the suspicions of the French consul, who had Mannesmann shadowed during his last stay in Athens, allayed. The mining enterprises offered perfect cover for the storage of materials of military importance. Weapons were to be acquired in Greece and Germany, and to be transported with a steam vessel which could make the passage from Gavdos to al-Difna'a (320 km) in about 12 hours. Mannesmann proposed to continue propaganda among the Sanusiya for an attack on Egypt, even if Sayyid Ahmad and the Italians were to reopen hostilities.<sup>45</sup>

In early July Mannesmann reported that the Sanusiya had broken off negotiations with the British and were ready to attack Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria. Although Italy had entered the war on the Entente side in June 1915 Sayyid Ahmad had informed Mannesmann that the offensive against the Italians could, if Germany so wished, be delayed until a later date. He urgently pleaded for large amounts of war materials. Captain Nadolny replied that the material could be provided; yet there was the problem of Ottoman cooperation. Mannesmann appeared to have entered into the agreement with Sayyid Ahmad without consulting Enver's brother Nuri, who was the Ottoman representative in Libya. Mannesmann was instructed to contact and cooperate fully with Nuri Bey until Enver Paşa had been consulted about the matter.<sup>46</sup>

Both the weapons and the funds turned out to be difficult to obtain, and their delivery was greatly delayed.<sup>47</sup> Mannesmann was increasingly starved of funds, and the German propaganda effort suffered accordingly. Enver Paşa tried to cut Mannesmann out altogether and reiterated his pleas to make Nuri Bey the sole recipient of any funds or arms to be sent to Tripolitania at the end of August. Yet he need not have worried.<sup>48</sup> As late as November 1915 the ways and means of transferring the necessary funds to Mannesmann were still under

<sup>45</sup> PAFO, File R21134, AZ A19326, Chania, 05.06.1915: Mannesmann to Nadolny.

<sup>46</sup> PAFO, File R21134, AZ A20733, Berlin, 05.07.1915: Mannesmann to Nadolny, Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>47</sup> PAFO, File R21135, AZ A22466, Chania, 27.07.1915: Krüger to Foreign Office.

<sup>48</sup> PAFO, File R21135, AZ L367683, Constantinople, 29.08.1915: Ottoman GHQ to German Embassy, Pera.



discussion.<sup>49</sup> It had turned out impossible to obtain the weapons in Sweden, and even if they could be found intensive Italian patrolling of the Tripolitanian coast was an almost insurmountable obstacle for their transport to Libya. The German military authorities had refused to provide sufficient war materials, probably out of the scant regard paid to the Middle Eastern war theatre by the German high command. Nadolny proposed to give the difficulties of transport as a reason for the delay to Enver Paşa to avoid the suspicion of a lack of German commitment for the Tripolitanian campaign and to postpone further negotiations until the weapons were available.<sup>50</sup>

### **Ottoman Propaganda in Tripolitania**

Ottoman-German relations often were strained over questions of command in operations and propaganda in Libya and deteriorated in the course of the war. The Ottomans and Enver Paşa in particular, regarded Tripolitania as an Ottoman province in which they were unwilling to have German agents working independently. Another bone of contention was the German obsession with the preservation of Italian neutrality, in which the Ottomans had little or no interest. Italy had taken Tripolitania by force, the action had been condoned by the international community of great powers, and the wound was by no means healed. Ottoman attempts to reconcile Sayyid Ahmad and the Italians therefore were at best lip-service to German and Austrian wishes; in reality the Ottomans were busily organising Sanusi forces to enable them to cope with the Italians.

In October 1914 an Ottoman officer, Sami Bey, was sent on a peace-making mission to Tripolitania. High-ranking Italian officials informed Sami in Rome that they were very keen on peace with Sayyid Ahmad; they were prepared to subsidise him generously if he accepted the offer. Sami informed German consul Mr. Toepke in Naples that Italy regarded an agreement with Sayyid Ahmad as an easy way out of an embarrassing and costly military situation. The only real obstacle for this agreement was Sayyid Ahmad's insistence on Turkey being a co-signatory of the treaty, to which Italy objected on grounds of prestige. The Italian minister for the colonies had informed Sami of the bad impression German and Ottoman supplies of weapons and officers would make on Italian public opinion; yet Sami had assured him that Turkey wanted peace and friendship with Italy and had not supplied any weapons. Any weapons the Sanusiya had received since the outbreak of war came from the British (an extremely convenient scapegoat at the time), who wished to harass the Italians and keep them from further colonial enterprises. Sami had, in return, warned the Italian authorities against attacking Austria; the high prestige

<sup>49</sup> PAFO, File R21137, AZ A33079, Athens, 12.11.1915: Mirbach (Ambassador) to Foreign Office.

<sup>50</sup> PAFO, File R21135, AZ A22360, Berlin, 30.07.1915: Weendonk to Foreign Office.

enjoyed by Austria and Germany in Libya might then make the country impossible to retain.

When Mr. Toepke asked Sami to assist the attempts to make peace between Sayyid Ahmad and Italy, Sami promised to do so but drew attention to the considerable time and funds necessary for that endeavour. Germany could help his mission by pressing for his appointment as one of the three representatives of the Sultan in Tripoli, and by obtaining letters from the Sultan to Sayyid Ahmad urging for peace with the Italians. It was, however, doubtful if a Sanusiya attack on Egypt would materialise; Sayyid Ahmad had no quarrel with the British and emptying his *zawiyas* of forces might tempt the Italians to attack him from the rear. On the other hand the Italians were quite desperate and had already attempted to negotiate an armistice or peace agreement with Sayyid Ahmad, several times without success.

Sami regarded the newspaper campaign stressing that "Islam" was not fighting against Christianity, but only against some nations the caliph had singled out as enemies of Islam, as useful. Particular attention should be paid to the Qur'an permitting alliances with non-Muslim kingdoms if such was in the interest on the *umma*. Newspaper articles should also fuel Italian suspicions that Britain and France were supplying the Sanusiya with weapons. Leaflets, especially the *jihad*-fatwas, should be distributed in all of northern Africa, including Egypt, where British censorship was, according to Sami, not as efficient as the Germans believed it to be. Many nationalist newspapers were circulated in secret, and it had even been possible for some bedouin shaykhs, who were known as enemies of the British, to cross the country in order to return to Tripolitania.<sup>51</sup>

Mr. von Schweinitz, the military attaché of the German embassy in Rome, advised Toepke in his reply that Sami was an adventurer with only doubtful connections with the Ottoman government. He should therefore not be trusted; Toepke should try to persuade Sami to return to Istanbul, as he could not possibly do any good in Italy or Libya. The best way to allay Italian suspicions of the Germans was to open negotiations with the Italian authorities in Rome and Libya, not intermediaries with doubtful character and credentials.<sup>52</sup>

In reality Sami Bey appears to have been a sort of unofficial envoy of the Ottoman government, whose mission aimed both at ingratiating the Ottomans with the Germans by supporting their attempts to make peace between the Italians and the Sanusiya, and at bringing Arab leaders in Tripolitania to give "little proofs of their activity and fighting prowess" by attacking Italian supply caravans and other minor targets to keep the occupying forces busy and anxious. The reason for this Ottoman double-dealing was clearly the fact that Turkey had excellent relations with the Sanusiya. Ottoman gestures for peace with Italy

<sup>51</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A33012, Naples/Rome, 18.11.1914: Toepke to von Schweinitz.

<sup>52</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A33012, Rome, 19.11.1914: Von Schweinitz to Toepke.

would be worth a lot to Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, while the Ottomans themselves were not at all interested in peace in Libya. The Germans were apparently aware of these Ottoman calculations; Mr. von Schweinitz proposed to have German consular officials in Tripolitania contact the tribes directly in order to facilitate an armistice or peace agreement. After consultation with the Italian and Ottoman authorities the German government accepted these proposals.<sup>53</sup>

In contrast to German propaganda the Ottomans augmented their propaganda with arms shipments to Libya. Privately the Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, Hilmi Paşa, informed the German ambassador that he had weapons smuggled from Fiume to Tripoli and Tunisia, with the official endorsement by the Italians who probably believed the arms were to be used against the French and not their forces in Tripolitania.<sup>54</sup>

The information that a British agent, 'Izzat al-Jundy, a former agent of the Khedive, had been sent to Sayyid Ahmad in December 1914 to conclude a peace treaty in exchange for money and supplies triggered the next phase of Ottoman propaganda in Libya. Although, as the intelligence source estimated, there was no immediate danger of Sayyid Ahmad accepting the offer, Enver Paşa was advised to increase the pressure on the Sanusi leader in order to prevent troublesome developments.<sup>55</sup> Khedive Abbas Hilmi testified to the character of Dr. Jundy, who he claimed was "open to bribes, corrupt and utterly unreliable", and had long been on the British payroll.<sup>56</sup>

The Ottoman government reacted by despatching Çorumlu Halit Reşit Bey, a long-standing member of the TM, to Libya as propaganda agent. Reşit Bey travelled via Rome, where he met with the Italian minister for the colonies, Mr. Martini. Martini gave him a personal letter to Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>57</sup> In late December Enver Paşa sent a telegram to Sayyid Ahmad which referred to the claimed Ottoman victories which had been won against the Russians in the Caucasus. As "the grace of God" obviously was with the Ottoman forces, Sayyid Ahmad was exhorted to set out on the attack on Egypt, held by the British, "the main enemies of Islam", forthwith.<sup>58</sup> Çorumlu Reşit Bey had meanwhile arrived in Libya, provided with a letter of introduction to Sayyid Ahmad from the Shaykh-ül-Islam. Reşit Bey had, however, also run into trouble with the Germans, who were supposed to furnish him with the necessary funds for his journey. Reşit Bey stressed the importance of his travelling in style; he described the golden pocket watch which captain Nadolny had given him as gift

<sup>53</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A33012, Rome, 20.11.1914: Von Schweinitz to German embassy Rome.

<sup>54</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A33037, Vienna, 01.12.14: Von Tschirschky to Foreign Office.

<sup>55</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A34323, Rome, 06.12.14: Flotow (ambassador) to Foreign Office.

<sup>56</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A35776, Vienna, 21.12.14: Von Tschirschky to Foreign Office.

<sup>57</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A34260, Rome, 10.12.14: Flotow to Foreign Office.

<sup>58</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A36291, Pera, 26.12.1914: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

for Sayyid Ahmad as "neither worthy of the giver nor the receiver." Instead he asked to be given 30,000 French Francs in order to equip himself suitably. For once, the Germans abandoned their tradition of stinginess; ambassador Wangenheim supported Reşit Bey's request as otherwise the success of the mission was seriously endangered.<sup>59</sup>

Reşit Bey had been given coded instructions for the CUP-representative in Sayyid Ahmad's headquarters by Enver Paşa. In Rome he had managed to keep his connections with the Ottoman and German authorities secret from the Italians, deluding Mr. Martini to regard him as a representative of a group of Ottoman personalities interested in good relations with Italy. Thus Mr. Martini had accepted Reşit Bey as official Italian peacemaker, although he warned him that he would not brook any official German or Ottoman intervention during the negotiations.<sup>60</sup>

Reşit Bey's instructions were quite sinister and ordered Sayyid Ahmad to be liquidated in case he accepted the British offers. Istanbul believed that the long inactivity of the Sanusiya indicated Sayyid Ahmad's unwillingness to break relations with the British. In Rome Reşit Bey tried to have pro-Ottoman articles published in the Italian press. He also had arranged for a reliable Italian journalist to be sent to the headquarters of the Sanusiya. Yet for the Ottoman government peace in Libya was not so much a heartfelt concern, but a bargaining tool. Enver Paşa was increasingly anxious about a possible attack on the Dardanelles. In anticipation of such an attack many officers and officials had already sent their families to safety in Asia Minor. Should this pessimistic attitude spread in the populace, demonstrations and out-breaks of violence against the Germans and the CUP government could be the outcome. To prevent this scenario Germany was exhorted to send armaments and ammunitions promptly.<sup>61</sup>

Events from mid-March 1915 onwards indicated some success of propaganda among the Sanusiya. Nuri Paşa informed Enver Paşa that the Sanusiya were now beginning to harass British outposts on the Egyptian border. There remained the problem of the Sanusiya's dependency on Egyptian grain, which could only be solved if Italy promised to supply the necessary foodstuffs and allowed for the import of weapons to the Sanusiya. In return the Sanusiya was to be persuaded to guarantee the safety of Italian supply caravans. Such an agreement, Enver believed, served Italy's interest best. Left without assistance, the Sanusiya leadership would be forced to join the British, who could use them against the Italians (here the Ottoman minister of war appeared quite unaware

<sup>59</sup> PAFO, File R21126, AZ A36761, Pera, 30.12.1914: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>60</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A886, Berlin, 08.01.1915: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

<sup>61</sup> PAFO, File R21127, AZ A1373, Berlin, 12.01.1915: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

that Italy's ambitions could much more easily be achieved if it simply joined the Entente - as was the case two and a half months later).<sup>62</sup>

The Ottomans were reluctant to inform the Germans of their activities, probably in order to conceal their disinterest to keep Italy neutral. Captain Nadolny repeatedly asked ambassador Wangenheim to obtain more information about Ottoman propaganda in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and the hinterland of Tripolitania from the Ottoman authorities.<sup>63</sup> Commander Humann discussed the matter extensively with Enver Paşa on April 11, 1915. Enver informed Humann that British watchfulness had so far prevented almost all propaganda operations in Egypt. The few Ottoman envoys in the country had to operate cautiously, yet the recent attempt on the life of sultan Husayn Kamil might have been inspired by their agitation. Ottoman propaganda in Libya had been more successful; Sayyid Ahmad had been appointed *vezir* (minister) by the Sultan and signed an agreement of mutual cooperation with the Ottomans. He had announced his intention to keep up relations with the British until a renewed attack could be carried out on the Suez Canal. Sayyid Ahmad and Enver both asked for German pressure on Italy to soften her attitude concerning imports of foodstuffs and weapons to the Sanusiya. In return Sayyid Ahmad had promised the Ottomans to recognise and accept the Italian presence on the coast. As already pointed out, Enver stressed that this was a most favourable deal for the Italians, whom he exhorted to comply.

Enver Paşa had already set up the necessary infrastructure to support Sanusiya operations against Egypt. Steamers and sailing vessels regularly commuted between the coast of Asia Minor and Tripolitania; Ottoman officers and some arms also had been despatched to Libya. The Ottomans also had managed to have Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi, leader of another branch of the Sanusiya ruling "dynasty", carry out propaganda in the Sudan from the Hijaz in exchange for recognition as an independent ruler in Wadai in western Sudan. Sulayman al-Baruni was stirring up the tribes in the hinterland of Tunisia and Algeria; he also had carried out a small raid on Egypt. As he had done so without Sayyid Ahmad's permission the latter had Baruni imprisoned in a Sanusi *zawiya* (fortified residence of an Islamic order) until Enver had managed to secure his release.<sup>64</sup>

More information became available to the Germans in early June 1915 after Oppenheim had set up the intelligence office of the German embassy. The baron had frequent contacts with Enver Paşa, who by then corresponded regularly with Sayyid Ahmad. The Sanusi leader also wrote frequently to

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<sup>62</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A9397, Constantinople, 15.03.1915: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>63</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A11372, Berlin, 29.03.1915: Nadolny to German embassy Istanbul.

<sup>64</sup> PAFO, File R21131, AZ A13487, Constantinople, 11.04.1915: Humann to Wangenheim.

Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi in the IOFE. Sayyid Ahmad had reconfirmed that he would attack the British as soon as an Ottoman force would cross the Suez Canal; Enver Paşa believed Sayyid Ahmad's commitment to be genuine, in which he was borne out by Nuri Bey. Nuri and Sayyid Ahmad were presently waiting near al-Salum for the right moment to open hostilities. The Italians and the Sanusiya had found a *modus vivendi*: the Italians had retired to the coast and allowed weapons and foodstuffs to reach the Sanusiya, which therefore had agreed to leave the Italians alone.

Enver intended to send large quantities of arms to Libya, although a previous mission had partly failed, as the steamer transporting the arms from Greece had been intercepted by an Italian patrol-boat. The crew had thrown the weapons overboard, but some Ottoman officers had made a safe landing and were now training Sanusiya forces. At the request of Sayyid Ahmad some 40 sons of Tripolitanian notables, then students in the tribal school (*aşiret mektebi*) had been sent back to Libya in the company of 20 Ottoman officers and 40 NCOs. The Sanusiya was already reasonably well equipped with 20 guns, 8 machine guns and 4 guns taken as booty from the Italians in 1911 at its disposal. Rifles were quite scarce (their number being between 15,000 and 20,000). A small factory for the fabrication of cartridges had been set up with Ottoman technical support. The Ottoman government supplied Sayyid Ahmad generously with funds and had arranged for foodstuffs to be imported to Tripolitania from Greece. Enver planned to have Sayyid Ahmad's nephew Muhammad al-Idrisi persuade sultan 'Ali Dinar of Darfur to join the jihad and to attack Egypt. The sultan commanded considerable respect in the Sudan and could rely on widespread support for his campaign.<sup>65</sup>

Relations between the Germans and the Ottomans over the Libyan issue became increasingly tense, as Enver Paşa resented German operations in the country carried out behind his back. He impressed on the German ambassador his request that all operations in Libya were to be coordinated by Nuri Bey, particularly as far as shipments of weapons and ammunition were concerned. Ambassador Hohenlohe (who at that time represented Wangenheim during the latter's vacation in Germany) advised the German government against complying with Enver's wishes; Mannesmann and other German envoys in Tripolitania should only be instructed to keep Nuri Bey informed, while acting independently.<sup>66</sup>

The Italian entry into the war allowed the Sanusiya to stock up its arms from raids on Italian garrisons. The Sanusiya were still, according to Nuri Bey, prepared to march on Egypt. The Sudanese were believed to be on the brink of joining the attack. As he remarked to Wangenheim, Enver was doubtful about

<sup>65</sup> PAFO, File R21134, AZ zu A18847, Istanbul, 07.06.1915: Oppenheim to Bethmann Hollweg.

<sup>66</sup> PAFO, File R21135, AZ A22361, Pera, 26.07.1915: Hohenlohe to Foreign Office.

the appeal of Pan-Islam; it was force, not propaganda, which would create rebellions in Libya, the Sudan and Egypt. Continued propaganda was still justified, as it forced the British to retain large contingents of troops in their colonies. Yet this propaganda effort needed centralised leadership. Enver accused the German agents of having offered arms to Sayyid Ahmad behind the back of the Ottomans. As the German offers were quite generous Sayyid Ahmad then increased his demands on the Ottomans and became more difficult to deal with. Coordination of propaganda in Libya between Germans and Ottomans was therefore of the greatest importance.<sup>67</sup> Even in the case of perfect coordination the results of propaganda would be negligible in the military field; the main aim of propaganda was to cause the British anguish and to bind British troops in Egypt.<sup>68</sup>

Division of efforts and conflicting political objectives may be identified as the main causes of failure of the German-Ottoman campaign in Libya. The problem was similar to that of cooperation with the Egyptian nationalists. Sayyid Ahmad and the Sanusiya aspired to sovereignty and independence in their territory, and had no desire at all to find themselves again under Ottoman tutelage. Enver repeatedly tried to centralise control over propaganda in Libya in Ottoman hands and to curb the independent operations of German agents in the country. The reason lay in conflicting German and Ottoman aims of the propaganda effort. Initially the Sanusiya regarded Germany as a mighty country conveniently distant and not interested in gaining control over Libya; it was satisfied to harm the British in Egypt as much as possible. The Ottomans, on the other hand, wished to reintegrate Libya into the Empire as a province, which local notables in Libya strongly objected to.<sup>69</sup>

Yet the Ottomans increasingly suspected Germany of having its own designs for the future of Libya and began to obstruct German propaganda; the same attitude was responsible for the failure of other German propaganda missions in Arabia, discussed below. The Germans realised this problem and despaired more or less by early 1916. According to Dr. Pröbster from the IOF, the Turks had no-one but themselves to blame for the fact that the Sanusiya was not yet fighting with greater enthusiasm. Nuri Bey's capabilities notwithstanding most Ottoman officers assumed a completely wrong attitude to the Tripolitanian Arabs: they threatened to have Cemal Paşa sent to Tripolitania to establish a "terror regime" similar to that in the Arab provinces. The Ottomans had also ignored Sayyid Ahmad's ambition to become an independent ruler, while the British had even offered him recognition as Khedive of Egypt and caliph of Islam. Thus the Ottomans had deprived themselves of a powerful ally. Sayyid

<sup>67</sup> PAFO, File R21134, AZ A20696, Pera, 04.07.1915: Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

<sup>68</sup> PAFO, File R21134, AZ A21480, Pera, 08.07.1915: Nadolny to Bethmann Hollweg.

<sup>69</sup> PAFO, File R21136, AZ A29528, Pera, 11.10.1915: Von Lossow/Wangenheim to Foreign Office.

Ahmad would have been able to stir up serious trouble in Tunisia, Algeria, Upper Egypt and the Sudan, if only he could expect a favourable reaction to his ambitions. If the Ottoman attitude remained unchanged propaganda operations in Libya were doomed to failure.<sup>70</sup>

The German chagrin was well justified, as even British newspapers gloated over Sayyid Ahmad's reluctance to cooperate with the Germans and the Ottomans. They reported that the Sanusiya leader had substituted his own flag for the Ottoman and that Sayyid Ahmad had promised to uphold good relations with the Egyptian government.<sup>71</sup> Like the Egyptian nationalists Sayyid Ahmad was a typical local leader in the Middle East during the First World War; he was sitting on the fence, waiting to see which side would have greater luck in war and, more importantly, offered the best price for his cooperation. His actions were based on pragmatic, not ideological considerations.

### The "Prisoner of the Mahdi" as Propagandist - Carl Neufeld

Carl Neufeld had come to Egypt from Germany in 1880 and settled in Assuan in 1881; in that year he also obtained British citizenship. During a business trip in Dongola in 1887 he had been taken prisoner by the Mahdists and remained in captivity for 12 years. Neufeld had avoided execution by converting to Islam and by manufacturing gunpowder for the Mahdists. Although there were repeated campaigns in Europe to buy Neufeld's freedom he only was released in 1898 after Lord Kitchener's victory at Omdurman.<sup>72</sup>

Neufeld continued to reside in the Sudan until expelled by the British as *persona non grata* in September 1914. Neufeld travelled to Germany via Italy and offered his services as a propaganda agent to German ambassador Flotow in Rome on October 12, 1914. Neufeld's credentials were impressive; he had worked as a doctor and supervisor over some 5,000 workers for the Sudanese public works authority, and managed to acquire considerable goodwill among the natives. Neufeld proposed to insert propaganda messages into the Sudan and Upper Egypt from several places in the the Hijaz. The Sudanese telegraph network might be employed to spread such messages. Neufeld impressed the necessity on Flotow to keep his mission secret from Slatin Paşa, whom he suspected to be too friendly with the British to let such a propaganda operation develop in the Sudan.<sup>73</sup>

Although Neufeld's credentials were flawless he still had a major drawback in the eyes of the German authorities: he was out of funds, and

<sup>70</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A6442, Berlin, 10.03.1916: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

<sup>71</sup> PAFO, File R21136, AZ A27650, Berlin, 21.09.1915: The Standard, London, 13.09.1915: The Senussis (Newspaper Clipping).

<sup>72</sup> PAFO, File R21124, AZ A24479, Foreign Office report about Carl Neufeld.

<sup>73</sup> PAFO, File R21125, AZ A26866, Rome 12.10.1914: Flotow to Foreign Office.



parsimony, ever prevalent among German officials, led them at first to believe that Neufeld was just another adventurer out for a quick penny. Neufeld greatly resented the way he had been treated by the German diplomats; right on the first page of his diary, which he began after his offer had been grudgingly accepted, he noted that he was "glad eventually to be given the occasion to prove to the diplomats that they have misjudged me."<sup>74</sup>

The Foreign Office had Neufeld attached to a group of German officers under the command of lieutenant-colonel Schwabe about to depart for Palestine. He had only measly funds at his disposal for his work; the German military mission in Istanbul was advised to pay Neufeld 40 Ltq. per month and to reimburse his travel and accommodation expenses. For his propaganda work in Egypt and the Sudan Neufeld was to be advanced 1,000 pounds sterling, for which the Military Mission would be reimbursed by the Foreign Office.

This incident triggered an odd reaction. The Foreign Office had not informed general Liman of Neufeld's mission. Consequently the general refused to pay out any funds until the Foreign Office had verified Neufeld's claims. The Foreign Office disclaimed any knowledge of Neufeld and advised Liman not to pay out. The most likely explanation for this strange exchange is that the circle of persons aware of Neufeld's mission was exceedingly small, possibly not larger than the IOFE, and that therefore general Liman's correspondent knew nothing of it. Lieutenant-Colonel Schwabe was informed of the negative reaction of the Foreign Office and asked if he wished to dismiss Neufeld or send him back to Berlin. Schwabe wished to retain Neufeld's services as an interpreter, while his political activities could, without harm, be put on halt for the time being.<sup>75</sup>

On April 6, 1915, captain Nadolny informed the Imperial Colonial Office that after several failed attempts to instigate revolts in the Sudan a renewed attempt was to be undertaken from German South-East Africa. Only indigenous agents were to be used; after the rebellions had broken out, German agents were to be despatched to the Sudan as "organisers and leaders." Topics of propaganda were to be the liberation from British rule, the Holy War and the German-Ottoman alliance, in captain Nadolny's interpretation the "German-Islamic alliance."<sup>76</sup> Although the scheme was not implemented propaganda in the Sudan again gained prominence, and Neufeld was given the occasion to carry out this mission.

The German authorities had meanwhile received information about Egypt and the Sudan from Gustav Mez, a German businessman then living in Morcote,

<sup>74</sup> PAFO, File R21141, AZ L268705, Travel Diary Carl Neufeld [hereafter Travel Diary Carl Neufeld], 2.

<sup>75</sup> PAFO, File R21129, AZ Nr. 4230 geh., Constantinople, 14.02.1915: Liman von Sanders to Imperial Ministry of War, Berlin.

<sup>76</sup> PAFO, File R21130, AZ A12121, Berlin, 06.04.1915: Nadolny to Imperial Colonial Office.

Switzerland, who had spent many years in Egypt, and had excellent contacts with Egypt through Italian channels. The Sudan was restive and Pan-Islamic propaganda from Jiddah could yield real success. It might be possible to have Sudanese Arab traders carry out sabotage operations against railways; the British would then be unable to bring troops into the Sudan, while Egyptian army troops already in the country were Muslims who would not fight against their fellow Muslims. Upheavals in the Sudan would also make themselves quickly felt on the Suez Canal front.<sup>77</sup> Therefore Mez proposed to despatch a reliable propaganda agent to Jiddah, and Neufeld was given the job.<sup>78</sup>

Neufeld set out to prepare his mission. He planned to travel to Medina and on to Yemen, whence he would cross the Red Sea into the Sudan. Neufeld's commanding officer was to be Major von Ramsay, a member of Lieutenant-Colonel Schwabe's mission who also was to administer the meagre funds for Neufeld's journey. The lack of trust in Neufeld is amply shown by the stipulation that Major von Ramsay was to advance Neufeld the sums bit by bit - which, as we shall see, was as much responsible for the failure of Neufeld's mission as the German Foreign Office's omission to obtain Cemal Paşa's permission in advance. Arguably, as matters turned out, this was a wise precaution; once Cemal Paşa got wind of Neufeld's presence in the Hijaz he immediately recalled him to Jerusalem and did not permit him to return.

At least on paper, Neufeld was a Muslim, and could therefore (unlike Roloff) travel without disguising himself. His Muslim name was "Shaykh Abdallah Nofal al-Almani." After 30 years residence in the Sudan Neufeld was thoroughly acquainted with Arab society and Islamic customs, which came in handy when an irate fellow pilgrim suspected him of being a Christian in Medina. Neufeld's travelling companions, four Muslim sailors from the German steamer "General", the yacht of the German Embassy in Istanbul, had rescued him by vouchsafing for his Muslim credentials.<sup>79</sup> Neufeld travelled extensively through Palestine while preparing his journey and, as his diary indicates, was a skilled and able propagandist and orator. He ceaselessly discussed the war, German-Muslim friendship and other relevant issues with fellow travellers and Ottoman officials.

On July 12, 1915, Neufeld arrived in Medina. He began his propaganda work by setting up a "salon" in his residence, displaying propaganda material and lending out books and pamphlets to the Muslim intelligentsia. Neufeld hired the services of Muhammad Salih al-Tunisi al-Turki, a teacher in the Turkish government school, as propaganda agent; he was to continue Neufeld's work after his return to Damascus. Neufeld ceaselessly preached Britain's duplicity and treacherousness, apparently with good success. Muhammad Salih, on the

<sup>77</sup> PAFO, File R21132, AZ A14790, Morcote, 25.04.1915: Mez to Foreign Office.

<sup>78</sup> PAFO, File R21131, AZ A12837, Morcote, 09.04.1915: Mez to Foreign Office.

<sup>79</sup> Travel Diary Carl Neufeld, 35.

other hand, was sometimes overzealous and had to be restrained; Neufeld opposed Salih's proposal to show propaganda movies to avoid alienating Muslim sensitivities of pictures showing human beings.<sup>80</sup> Neufeld also befriended the bedouin and became the *khalifa* (trusted partner) of one bedouin shaykh.<sup>81</sup> His diary contains a great amount of information about local conditions in the Hijaz, especially referring to the complicated and fragile economic-political relationship between Sharif Husayn and the bedouin.<sup>82</sup>

Neufeld was prevented from continuing his journey to Yemen for lack of funds, which Major von Ramsay was unable to send to his agent.<sup>83</sup> Neufeld's fate was sealed, however, when Cemal Paşa informed the Muhafiz of Medina on August 30, 1915 that the German agent was to be sent back to Jerusalem forthwith.<sup>84</sup>

Cemal Paşa had several reasons to recall Neufeld. First, he was not amused to have an unauthorised German agent at large in the Hijaz. In all likelihood Cemal Paşa would have refused German requests for permission, both from Muslim sensitivities and in order to contain the influence of the Germans in Syria and the Hijaz. This interest originated not only with political, but also personal considerations: Cemal continuously was at loggerheads with the German area commander general Falkenhayn, who was somewhat less than a paragon of diplomatic skills.<sup>85</sup> Politics were, however, paramount: the Hijaz was steadily becoming one of the political hotspots of the empire. The Ottomans were aware that Sharif Husayn negotiated with the British, but had so far been forced to turn a blind eye for fear of risking a British blockade of the Red Sea. Cemal Paşa reasoned that it would have been detrimental to Ottoman prestige if the Germans found out the weakness of Ottoman control over the Hijaz. Cemal Paşa's fears were shared by Enver Paşa, who made light of the Hashemite-led revolt after being questioned about its importance by the German ambassador.<sup>86</sup>

In November 1915 Neufeld was sent to Berlin to report about his journey; en route he told the German military attaché in Istanbul of his intentions to carry out a second mission. The attaché was favourably impressed and deemed Neufeld "extremely suitable" for such an undertaking "in spite of his old age"

<sup>80</sup> Travel Diary Carl Neufeld, 55.

<sup>81</sup> The relationship of *khalifa*, as Neufeld described it, was a kind of partnership between a bedouin shaykh and an urban dweller, most commonly a merchant. The khalifas agreed to look faithfully after each other's interests. This usually meant that the bedouin shaykh protected the merchant's caravans, while the merchant became a banker and urban representative of the shaykh.

<sup>82</sup> Travel Diary Carl Neufeld, 123.

<sup>83</sup> Travel Diary Carl Neufeld, 132.

<sup>84</sup> Travel Diary Carl Neufeld, 131.

<sup>85</sup> FA/MA, File MSg2/3030: E.A. Müller: commentary on "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom."

<sup>86</sup> See FA/MA, File RM5/2321, 12.07.1916: Enver Paşa intimated that the Hijaz had been subdued incompletely and that after the war a reliable Anatolian division was to be shifted to the Hijaz.

(Neufeld was then 56 years of age). Neufeld even managed to make a good impression on Oppenheim. Colonel von Lossow, the military attaché, forwarded four reports Neufeld had written about local conditions in the Hijaz and local Muslim personalities sympathetic to the Central Powers to the German general staff. They were the Moroccan Sa'id al-Halim Sa'id Muhammad al-Atabi, the Tunisian Muhammad Salih al-Tunisi al-Turki and the Egyptian Mahmud Shuwayyil, whom Neufeld had managed to persuade of the Ottoman commitment to liberate Egypt. While Neufeld secured the services of these men for German/Ottoman propaganda (Oppenheim met with Muhammad Salih in Damascus shortly later and arranged for paper, printing material and funds to be put at Salih's disposal), his intimate contact with the bedouin was potentially of the greatest value - or should have been. He was probably the first German field agent to point out that the bedouin's political stance depended on economic, not ideological, considerations. The bedouin only recognised governors who respected their traditional customs and provided for their survival. Plunder of caravans and raiding was not an expression of anti-Ottoman feeling, but simply a method to provide sustenance. With tact and tenacity the bedouin might be brought to support the sultan-caliph wholeheartedly; brute force would avail nothing.<sup>87</sup>

The Germans had not given up their plans to conduct propaganda in the Sudan; in July 1915 Mr. Mez's proposal had been discussed and accepted after Consul Schmidt in Jerusalem had been consulted. Schmidt supported the idea and advised that the timing of rebellions in the Sudan should coincide with the second expedition against the Suez Canal.<sup>88</sup> Dr. Prüfer shared this opinion, resulting in several months delay in propaganda operations in the Sudan.<sup>89</sup>

For the second attempt the Germans ideally wanted Slatin Paşa, not Neufeld, to be in charge. Slatin declined; he did not believe in the usefulness of the scheme and had no sympathy for the Egyptian nationalists. He indicated that he was willing to work for Germany, but did not want to fight against the British directly.<sup>90</sup> Slatin's reservations were shared by the British; a rather gloating article in the British propaganda newspaper "The Near East" from November 26, 1915, stressed that in spite of the workings of "one of the most prominent citizens (of Khartoum) of alien birth and long residence" - in other words, Neufeld - after the outbreak of war the country had remained completely quiet; yet it also advised the British authorities in Sudan to be vigilant, as

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<sup>87</sup> PAFO, File R21137, AZ zu A33824: Istanbul, 13.11.1915: von Lossow (military attaché Pera) to Political Section of German General Staff: Neufeld's reports.

<sup>88</sup> PAFO, File R21135, AZ A24205, Jerusalem, 04.07.1915: Schmidt to Foreign Office.

<sup>89</sup> PAFO, File R21135, AZ zu A24205, Damascus, 03.07.1915: Prüfer to Foreign Office.

<sup>90</sup> PAFO, File R21136, AZ A30239, Vienna, 18.10.1915: Von Tschirschky to Bethmann-Hollweg.

renewed German propaganda might well result in a major eruption, especially when supported in force by troops from German East Africa.<sup>91</sup>

The importance the Germans gave to propaganda in the Sudan is indicated by the fact that two missions were despatched to the Sudan simultaneously in late 1915: one to be carried out by Neufeld, the other one by Major Ottmar Freiherr von Stotzingen. Both parties were to travel together to the Hijaz, whence Neufeld was to proceed to the Sudan and von Stotzingen to southern Arabia.

With captain Nadolny's support Neufeld was commissioned for his second journey, and even the rather high sum of 20,000 Reichsmark he considered necessary was approved. Neufeld was, however, left to his own devices in order to obtain permission from the Ottoman authorities. He was given two tasks; to reactivate his contacts in Medina and organise a regular despatch of propaganda material to the Sudan; and to get to the Sudan in person (via Abyssinia) in order to cause rebellions of influential tribal leaders and Sultan 'Ali Dinar of Darfur.<sup>92</sup>

Dr. Prüfer supported Neufeld's mission, but warned also that Neufeld had been recalled some months earlier on Cemal Paşa's orders. He was therefore unlikely to be given permission to travel freely in Arabia. He also was in grave danger of exposure by British spies, who now knew him to be a German agent. The safest bet was for Neufeld to apply for his permit in a private capacity; the German embassy in Istanbul should only become involved in case of absolute necessity.<sup>93</sup> Dr. Prüfer proposed to put Neufeld under his own command for the duration of his mission, after Neufeld had travelled to Palestine with Major von Ramsay. This also represented a change of commanding institution; from now on the Foreign Office, not the General Staff, would finance and supervise Neufeld. Neufeld was to maintain the strictest discretion about his mission and to report regularly to Dr. Prüfer. His correspondence could be censored, and was to contain nothing potentially offensive for the Turkish authorities, with whom Neufeld should avoid any friction during his journey.<sup>94</sup>

While the Foreign Office was willing to take on the financial burden it nevertheless wanted the mission to be run by the General Staff. Consequently Neufeld was put again under major von Ramsay's supervision. Neufeld had meanwhile applied for and obtained permission from Enver Paşa, provided he pursued only personal business (which might entail Pan-Islamic propaganda, however not in any official function). As it turned out, Cemal Paşa refused to

<sup>91</sup> PAFO, File R21137, AZ A35710, London, 26.11.1915: Article in *The Near East: The Situation in the Sudan*.

<sup>92</sup> PAFO, File R21137, AZ A35284, Berlin, 06.12.1915: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>93</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A36871, Istanbul, 19.12.1915: Von Lossow to Section IIIb of German General Staff.

<sup>94</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A305, Berlin, 04.01.1916: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

accept this permission, thereby frustrating Neufeld's second mission to the Sudan.<sup>95</sup>

Major von Ramsay planned to leave for Istanbul on February 1, 1916, but had to delay his departure, as Neufeld's travelling permit from the Ottoman authorities had not yet arrived. Neufeld's financial situation became desperate; there was continuous bickering between the General Staff, the Foreign Office and the IOFE as to who should pay Neufeld a meagre stipend. It was difficult to employ Neufeld in the IOFE, as consul Schabinger noted; while Neufeld's spoken Arabic was flawless the same could not be said about his writing, which made Neufeld useless as an author of propaganda materiel.<sup>96</sup> Worse, the propaganda material Neufeld was to take along had only been commissioned "as soon as possible" at the end of February 1916.<sup>97</sup>

Enver Paşa's permission for a German agent to travel to the Sudan via Arabia arrived in early March.<sup>98</sup> Neufeld had meanwhile proposed to professor Mittwoch to employ local notables in the Hijaz as propaganda agents, as they would be less conspicuous than an official agent; they also would serve propagandist purposes better than the newsrooms Oppenheim planned to set up in Medina and Mecca. Neufeld reiterated his proposal to hire Muhammad Salih, Shaykh Hamdan and Sa'id Ma'mun Abu Fadil, as local propaganda agents. Said Ma'mun was to be paid to reopen the newspaper *Al-Madina al-munawwara*, which had been forced to close down at the outbreak of war. Neufeld's *khalifa*, the bedouin shaykh Awad al-Mukhlis, had informed Neufeld that the bedouin were desirous of setting up a school, for which they applied for 50 Ltq. Neufeld was convinced that this meagre sum would reap great benefits, especially if he was given the money to deliver in person (again to avoid too close a connection with the government). Neufeld obviously realised that the bedouin were suspicious of any state authority and would have resented any indebtedness to the Ottoman state.<sup>99</sup>

Neufeld and Sa'id Ma'mun Abu Fadil were now attached to the von Stotzingen mission, which was to leave for Istanbul in mid-March 1916.<sup>100</sup> They were to accompany von Stotzingen to the Hijaz, whence Neufeld was to make his way on to the Sudan. The eventual failure of this expedition, due to Cernel Paşa's apprehensions (and Sharif Husayn's revolt) also prevented Neufeld from

<sup>95</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ zu A305, Berlin, 18.01.1916: Zimmermann to Political Section of General Staff; Constantinople, 01.01.1916: Neufeld to Enver Paşa.

<sup>96</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A4685, Berlin, 19.02.1916: Schabinger to Wesendonk; Nadolny to Schabinger.

<sup>97</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A5550, Berlin, 29.02.1916: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

<sup>98</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A3106, Berlin, 02.03.1916: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

<sup>99</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A6413, Berlin, 09.03.1916: Mittwoch to Nadolny; Neufeld to Mittwoch.

<sup>100</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A6775, Berlin, 12.03.1916: Wesendonk to Foreign Office; File R21139, AZ A6070, Berlin, 13.03.1916: Zimmermann to Embassy Istanbul.

carrying out his mission. After returning to Palestine Neufeld probably worked as interpreter for the German forces; he died in 1918. From summer 1916 onwards the Germans and Ottomans were on the defensive against Sharif Husayn's revolt and no further propaganda missions were carried out, as they were now unlikely to have any success in Arabia.

Neufeld probably suffered more than any other agent from the two main shortcomings of the German propaganda institutions. They were run by a rather snobbish and elitist group of individuals, who often had no first-hand knowledge of the territories they were supposed to conduct propaganda in, but resented the intrusion of outsiders without proper standing in society. Second, the measly sums Imperial Germany deemed sufficient for its war propaganda led to the problem of Neufeld never being able to conduct his operations as he saw fit - exasperating for himself, but probably seen as a good instrument of control from the point of view of his superiors.

### The Mission von Stotzingen

Ottmar Freiherr von Stotzingen's mission to southern Arabia was an example of how the lack of cooperation between Germans and Ottomans, especially in the explosive political climate in Arabia, jeopardised German propaganda missions in the Middle East. The Ottoman authorities in general and Cemal Paşa in particular regarded the "Arab question" as a domestic affair, where the presence of Germans could only cause harm, both in real and in propagandist terms.

The mission had originally been conceived by the German secretary of state for the colonies, Mr. Solf, in December 1915. In a letter to general von Falkenhayn, then chief of staff of the German army, Solf had described the plight of the German forces in German East Africa. They were greatly outnumbered and could not be supplied with war materials from home, thus making the fall of the colony inevitable.<sup>101</sup> Rebellions in the Sudan, however, could bring a much-needed respite for the small German "Schutztruppe" under the capable command of general von Lettow-Vorbeck, especially as the tribes in Sudan still remembered "the years of the Mahdist rebellion."<sup>102</sup> Weapons could be smuggled in from Abyssinia, which also offered a safe haven if the rebellion should be defeated. The Abyssinians would probably cooperate, as civil war in the Sudan would permit Abyssinian slave traders to undertake raids. The rebellion could be expected to spread to Somalia; altogether large numbers of British troops would be bound in the Sudan and would not be available for use against German East Africa.<sup>103</sup> The main difficulty was communication with

<sup>101</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A 1894, Berlin, 29.12.1915: Solf to Falkenhayn: Rebellions in the Sudan [hereafter Solf], 1.

<sup>102</sup> Solf, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Solf, 3.

Sudanese leaders and the provision of funds for the purchase of weapons in Abyssinia; native agents, preferably Yemeni traders who had regular contacts with the Sudan and Abyssinia could however solve this problem. The agents were to approach Abyssinian grandees and persuade them to organise the acquisition and distribution of weapons, propaganda material and funds.<sup>104</sup>

Time was pressing, as the rebellions would take some months to prepare. If the matter were tackled at once they would erupt in summer 1916, the period when weather conditions were most favourable for the British to attack German East Africa.<sup>105</sup> Solf concluded by asking Falkenhayn which institution (the General Staff or the ministry for the colonies) was to assume responsibility for the undertaking, as the mission clearly also served the General Staff's interests.<sup>106</sup>

Captain Nadolny from Section IIIb agreed with Mr. Solf. He proposed not to restrict propaganda operations to Abyssinia, but also to address messages to Sultan 'Ali Dinar of Darfur. Should the Ottoman government endorse the despatch of a German mission to southern Arabia, a reliable Swiss agent was to be sent to Abyssinia in to prepare the ground.<sup>107</sup> The project was officially endorsed in late January 1916. A Jewish agent, Solomon Hall, was to inform the German legation in Addis Abbaba of the plans; he was deemed to be unsuitable for propaganda missions, for which another individual had to be found. The most obvious choice was Carl Neufeld, yet after previous experiences Solf and Nadolny doubted that he could reach his destination; they also believed him to be too well known to carry out a covert operation. The best idea was to send a mission to Hodeida in Yemen, whence the real propaganda in the Sudan could be carried out by native agents. Colonel von Lossow was instructed to apply for permission for an unarmed German mission to travel to Yemen. The mission was to be unarmed and only to carry the funds to avoid any accusation by enemies of the Ottoman authorities that the latter were permitting Christian soldiers to defile the Hijaz.<sup>108</sup>

Lossow's application was successful. The Ottoman authorities agreed to the creation of a German intelligence office in southern Arabia. The expedition was to be commanded by Major Ottmar Freiherr von Stotzingen, and a representative from the Foreign Office and the Imperial Colonial Office respectively. The necessary funds (2 million Reichsmark) would be provided by the Colonial Office.<sup>109</sup>

Probably on the initiative of the IOFE the Foreign Office proposed to include a Muslim representative of the Indian Independence Committee in the

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<sup>104</sup> Solf, 5.

<sup>105</sup> Solf, 6.

<sup>106</sup> Solf, 7.

<sup>107</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A1069, Berlin, 12.01.1916: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

<sup>108</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A1894, Berlin, 21.01.1916: Solf to von Jagow.

<sup>109</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A5296, Berlin, 25.02.1916: Nadolny to Foreign Office.



expedition, who could be useful to make contacts with "nationalist" Indians living in British East Africa and to persuade them to carry out sabotage operations. Captain Nadolny concurred; Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, chairman of the IIC, was contacted to propose a suitable candidate.<sup>110</sup> Three days later the Colonial Office pulled out of the preparations. Solf was concerned that Sharif Husayn had not given his permission for the mission to cross the Hijaz. Solf also expressed his doubts about the chances of success for the mission, which, he believed, would be hindered by Sharif Husayn and the Ottoman government. Under these circumstances he regarded the expedition as "a waste of funds."<sup>111</sup>

Captain Nadolny was determined to go through with the project. Enver Paşa's support had been enlisted in negotiating with Sharif Husayn, and cancelling the expedition would be seen as an affront by the Ottoman minister of war. The expedition would be scaled down: Freiherr von Stotzingen was to organise propaganda and to furnish the German authorities with information. He would not distribute funds for the purchase of arms. Nadolny proposed to split the cost (150,000 marks for one year) between the Foreign Office and the general staff, to which Wesendonk agreed.<sup>112</sup> Colonel von Lossow believed that the reduced size of the expedition would also make it easier to obtain Sharif Husayn's permission.<sup>113</sup>

Stotzingen's expedition, consisting of himself, Neufeld, dragoman Diehl from the Foreign Office and two subaltern officers left Berlin for Istanbul on March 15, 1916.<sup>114</sup> It was to travel to southern Arabia and open channels of communication with Abyssinia, the Sudan and Somalia. Envoys were to be despatched to the Sudan and Abyssinia, stirring up the tribes to revolt against the British. Stotzingen also was to try to bring the tribes to carry out sabotage operations against wireless installations and railways. Neufeld was supposed to travel to Addis Ababa in native garb, whence he was to make his way to the Sudan. Mr. von Syburg, German representative in Addis Ababa, had already been informed of the expedition.<sup>115</sup>

The IIC had chosen Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahid to accompany Stotzingen.<sup>116</sup> Even before the departure of the expedition from Berlin trouble was brewing. Enver Paşa had received a report from the shaykh of Medina informing him that German soldiers, even if provided with a military escort, would be in great danger in the Hijaz. The shaykh advised the German expedition to travel with a

<sup>110</sup> PAFO, File R21138, AZ A5539, Berlin, 29.02.1916: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

<sup>111</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A5838, Berlin, 03.03.1916: Solf to von Jagow.

<sup>112</sup> PAFO, File R21139, Berlin, 06.03.1916: Wesendonk to Foreign Office.

<sup>113</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A6204, Berlin, 07.03.1916: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>114</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A6729, Berlin, 13.03.1916: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>115</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A6767, Berlin, 13.03.1916: Zimmermann to German Legation Addis Ababa; AZ A7013, Berlin, 16.03.16: Nadolny to Foreign Office.

<sup>116</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A6776, Berlin, 13.03.1916: Zimmermann to Embassy Istanbul.

large contingent of Turkish troops bound for Yemen at the end of March. Stotzingen and his company would have to wear Turkish uniforms and give no indication that they were Germans.<sup>117</sup>

Neufeld encountered another obstacle; Cemal Paşa refused to permit his return to the Hijaz. Consequently Neufeld would have to leave the expedition somewhere north of Medina, probably in Ma'an, and to find a passage across the Red Sea on his own. Failing that, he would be forced to return to Germany.<sup>118</sup> Enver Paşa sweetened the pill by permitting an Indian to join the expedition.<sup>119</sup>

In Istanbul Stotzingen ran into further difficulties. The Indian representative, he reported on April 4, had been regarded with suspicion by the authorities, who only authorised him to accompany the mission after lengthy negotiations. Said Ma'mun also had been declared *persona non grata*, and been forced to remain in Constantinople working for Oppenheim.<sup>120</sup> Stotzingen also expressed doubts about the suitability of the NCOs and other German personnel for the task at hand.<sup>121</sup>

In Berlin the usual squabbles about money were in full swing. The war ministry asked Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg to have the *Deutsche Bank* in Istanbul advance the funds; they were to be reimbursed by the Turkish government after having been exchanged to paper money.<sup>122</sup> Success of that proposal was highly unlikely, as the Ottoman government regarded Stotzingen's mission unnecessary or even dangerous and was unlikely to surrender valuable gold resources for it. Enver Paşa remained, on the surface, committed to the mission to keep Germany, the Ottoman Empire's only supplier with money and war materials, happy; Cemal Paşa had no such scruples, was openly hostile to the expedition and managed to bring it to a premature end in Jiddah. Bethmann-Hollweg eventually authorised the exchange of 25 000 gold liras from embassy funds in Istanbul for gold certificates of the *Dette Publique Ottomane*.<sup>123</sup> Foreign Secretary von Jagow eventually managed to persuade the German government to put a million marks per month at the disposal of the Foreign Office for propaganda purposes, thereby solving a long-standing financial crisis.<sup>124</sup>

In Damascus Stotzingen immediately ran into trouble with Cemal Paşa, who was openly hostile to the mission, probably because he had not previously been informed of its existence. Fuat Bey, Cemal's chief of staff, demanded

<sup>117</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ L368143, Istanbul, 11.03.1916: Von Lossow to Section IIIb.

<sup>118</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ L368218, Istanbul, 31.03.1916: Von Lossow to Section IIIb.

<sup>119</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A8374, Constantinople, 31.03.1916: Metternich (ambassador) to Bethmann-Hollweg.

<sup>120</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A9659, Constantinople, 12.04.1916: Von Lossow to Section IIIb.

<sup>121</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A115411, Aleppo, 04.04.1916: Von Stotzingen to Blankenburg.

<sup>122</sup> PAFO, File R21142, Berlin, 12.04.1916: Ministry of War to Imperial Chancellor.

<sup>123</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A10212, Berlin, 17.04.1916: Chancellor to Minister of War.

<sup>124</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A9436, Berlin, 15.04.1916: von Jagow to Imperial Treasury.

authorisation from the Ottoman government in writing and informed von Stotzingen that the local authorities and Cemal Paşa were unaware of any such plans. Cemal Paşa declared categorically that he could not permit Christians to travel to the Hijaz; he only was prepared to have Stotzingen travel by ship from Al-Wadj via Jiddah to Lohaya in Yemen. Cemal Paşa thought it likely that Stotzingen would be captured either by the British or by the forces of Shaykh Idris of Asir. Fuat Bey further explained that permission for Stotzingen to travel to the Hijaz would lead to "the Arabs thinking that we are more interested in Germany than in Islam", which might lead in turn to a British landing in the Hijaz. Fuat Bey also tried to obstruct the expedition by an obvious lie: he regarded the creation of a wireless station in Hodeida as useless and claimed that there was no telegraph connection between San'a and Istanbul. Stotzingen was not fooled; Enver Paşa had already given him permission to use the telegraph connection from San'a.<sup>125</sup>

In reaction to Cemal Paşa's recalcitrance Stotzingen pondered several routes avoiding the Hijaz. Fuat Bey opposed all of these (probably merely relating Cemal Paşa's objections). Stotzingen was informed that not only the Hijaz, but Yemen as well, were off limits for Christians. When Stotzingen asked to apply to the German embassy in Istanbul for verification Fuat Bey grudgingly admitted in return that "some roads and places in Yemen were not prohibited."<sup>126</sup> Eventually Stotzingen was told to travel by rail to al-Ula, board a ship and sail to Qunfudah. From there they could, if provided with an escort, march to Al-Hafa on the coast of Yemen.<sup>127</sup>

At this time an influential Arab merchant offered Stotzingen to put him up with "a reputable Arab personality", a friend of Ibn Rashid's of the Shammar and well respected by all the tribes through whose areas they would have to travel. In this company the expedition could march from al-Ula to Taif in 16 days, where it could be rejoined by its escort. As far as von Stotzingen was concerned this proposal offered a safe and quick way to reach San'a without having to wait for the detachment. Neither religious arguments nor concern for the Germans' safety applied any more; but Cemal Paşa's continued hostility led Stotzingen to realise the true state of affairs. Stotzingen reported that Cemal Paşa was afraid the Germans might develop a special relationship with the Arabs.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>125</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A13299, Damascus, 15.04.1916: Von Stotzingen to Section IIIb, first report.

<sup>126</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A13299, Damascus, 15.04.1916, Von Stotzingen to IIIb, second report.

<sup>127</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A13299, Damascus, 15.04.1916, Von Stotzingen to IIIb, second report.

<sup>128</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A13299, Damascus, 23.04.1916: Von Stotzingen to IIIb, third report.

Stotzingen's travel plans did not materialise. Cemal Paşa, as Enver Paşa informed Stotzingen, was manifestly opposed to a German presence in Arabia. Stotzingen blamed Fuat Bey, who "had strong pro-French leanings", to have influenced his master against the Germans. The expedition left for al-Ula, already supervised by an official of the secret police, who pretended to be concerned for the Germans' safety. In spite of Fuad Bey's promises to facilitate their journey several days of delay were incurred in al-Ula.

Neufeld meanwhile was already on his way to al-Wadj; the Germans had agreed to travel separately in order to have at least one party reach Yemen. Stotzingen also wished to keep apart from Neufeld, whom he regarded as "too talkative" and too free with money. Worse, Neufeld had just married an 18-year-old Kurdish girl "according to Muslim custom" before leaving Damascus. The worldviews of a German staff officer and a man who had lived in the Sudan for 30 years were obviously not easily reconciled.<sup>129</sup>

Consul Loytved-Hardegg in Damascus tried his best to allay the suspicions of the Ottoman authorities; he proposed not to address letters to Stotzingen's mission to the "Intelligence Office Arabia" but to "Intelligence Office Abyssinia", as otherwise the Ottomans, and particularly Cemal Paşa, might get the impression that the Germans were pursuing their own aims in Arabia. If they suspected anything the Ottoman authorities would simply cut communications with Stotzingen. Cemal Paşa had already expressed his disapproval of German propaganda in Arabia by replacing Oppenheim's newsroom in Madina with a newsroom set up by the Muhafiz. Loytved-Hardegg also pointed out that Cemal Paşa had frustrated the Muslim Neufeld's mission in the previous year. The consul thought that Cemal was afraid of the local Arab shaykhs and notables enlisting German support against Ottoman control measures. Partly the Germans had to blame themselves; the behaviour of professors Moritz and Frobenius had been anything but discreet and tactful, which bode ill for German propaganda in this politically sensitive area. That Cemal Paşa did not have anything in principle against German propaganda was proved by his permission to conduct propaganda in Syria, where he believed to have firm control, in contrast to the Hijaz.<sup>130</sup>

Stotzingen was to find out that Cemal Paşa's apprehensions were not quite unfounded when he was held up by a local shaykh between Rabigh and Jiddah for a couple of days. He also was informed that tensions between the Ottoman authorities and Sharif Husayn would make it impossible to travel south of Medina.<sup>131</sup> Undeterred, von Stotzingen managed to make his way on to Yanbo.

<sup>129</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A14705, Al-Ula, 05.05.1916: Von Stotzingen to IIIb, fourth report.

<sup>130</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A16653, Damascus, 25.05.1916, Loytved-Hardegg to Wolff-Metternich.

<sup>131</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A16988, Tarabya, 21.06.1916: Wolff-Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg.

To his surprise the local authorities put no obstacles in his way. No-one apparently considered the coastal road prohibited to non-Muslims, as Cemal Paşa and Fuad Bey had assured the Germans. However, the expedition was stopped at Yanbo by a British naval blockade of the Hijaz, probably to block the flow of news about 'Ali Dinar of Darfur's revolt in western Sudan.<sup>132</sup>

After three weeks delay in Yanbo Stotzingen and Neufeld were ordered to return to Damascus on June 9, 1916; the order was based on grounds that bedouin revolts and British surveillance of the Red Sea would make its further progress impossible. Stotzingen had to leave his luggage and a sizeable amount of gold, in the Hijaz. Back in Damascus he reported that no further expeditions were feasible, as "the Hijaz bedouin, probably due to British propaganda, were in armed conflict with the Ottoman government." A small party of German sailors under the command of lieutenant commander Müller had been killed in a bedouin ambush near Jiddah. Stotzingen did not yet realise that he had been surprised by the outbreak of the Arab revolt.<sup>133</sup>

The aftermath of Stotzingen's expedition was tension between the Ottoman and the German government, as Cemal Paşa had seized the mission's gold funds and exchanged them with worthless paper currency. Stotzingen regarded any repetition of the expedition, even if there were no "bedouin trouble", to be useless without the gold.<sup>134</sup> But the Ottoman government now had other worries than a renewed German propaganda mission in the Hijaz. Enver Paşa ordered von Stotzingen to join the new canal expedition corps, which Freiherr von Kress was then assembling in Jerusalem.<sup>135</sup>

Stotzingen sent a final report to Berlin describing his experiences in mid-July. He regarded a repetition of the mission as impossible, due to Ottoman hostility and powerlessness in the Hijaz. His expedition had been frustrated because the Ottoman government did not desire the Germans to know about the weakness of its control over the Hijaz and the Holy Places. A new expedition could only hope to be successful with full Ottoman support, generous funds and translators familiar with Hijazi Arabic. Stotzingen also attributed part of the blame for the expedition's failure to his travelling companions. The Indian from the IIC had suffered too much from the arduous climatic conditions in the Hijaz to have been of any propagandist value. Neufeld had been less useful than expected, partly due to his previous troubles with Cemal Paşa, partly to personal reasons. Stotzingen gave Neufeld credit for his zeal to assist German

<sup>132</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A17028, Yanbo, 23.05.1916: Von Stotzingen to military attaché Istanbul, fifth report.

<sup>133</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A17997, Damascus, 30.06.1916: Von Stotzingen to military attaché Istanbul.

<sup>134</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A19462, Damascus, 18.07.1916: Von Stotzingen to ambassador Istanbul.

<sup>135</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A18750, Pera, 14.07.1916: Military attaché Istanbul to Section IIIb.

propaganda, but he behaved sometimes too carelessly to be fully trusted. Stotzingen also regarded Neufeld as over-enthusiastic and too uncritical of intelligence received from the bedouin, who "also did not take him seriously." Neufeld's over-enthusiasm had, to Stotzingen's horror, led him to try to reach the Sudan by another route than that authorised by Cemal Paşa, which could have endangered the entire expedition (as matters turned out that would hardly have made any difference).<sup>136</sup> Stotzingen's remark that Neufeld was not taken seriously by the bedouin is puzzling; during Neufeld's stay in Medina he appears to have become a personality of considerable influence, and after all how could von Stotzingen, with no command of Arabic, arrive at such a conclusion? It is most probable, that von Stotzingen also succumbed to the common suspicion of the soldier or official in relation to individuals with an "exotic" background, which was so characteristic of the conduct of the leaders of German propaganda and espionage.

In Jerusalem Stotzingen noted that the local population was indeed disenchanted with the Ottoman authorities, who were accused of corruption and also with the Germans, who were blamed for Turkey's entry into the war. Stotzingen was told that "if Germany had not supported Turkey, another power would have occupied this country and established just and good government." The outbreak of the revolt in the Hijaz had finally brought the Ottoman government to court the favour of the local population. Notables previously hostile to the government were either pardoned or bribed. The Ottoman authorities were seriously afraid of losing control for good; Stotzingen wryly remarked that Cemal Paşa, who had previously insisted that "no power in heaven or earth" could bring him to allow a Christian to enter the Hijaz, was now loudly clamouring for German pilots for the campaign against the rebels. A good example of how, in times of need, even the more religious members of the CUP could modify the rigidity of their beliefs.<sup>137</sup>

At the end of September 1916 the Political Section of the General Staff planned a new propaganda initiative. Yet although professor Enno Littmann volunteered to replace Mr. Diehl Stotzingen declined the honour; Oppenheim likewise regarded the undertaking to be futile after the outbreak of Sharif Husayn's revolt.<sup>138</sup> Indeed no further propaganda missions were undertaken after 1916. Sharif Husayn's revolt effectively neutralised the German-Ottoman appeals for jihad, and the Ottoman Empire also increasingly found itself on the defensive against the British forces advancing from Sinai.

<sup>136</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ A21231, Damascus, 16.07.1916: Von Stotzingen to Military Attaché Istanbul, sixth report

<sup>137</sup> PAFO, File R21142, AZ zu A28526, Jerusalem, 14.09.1916: Von Stotzingen to Military Attaché Istanbul, seventh report

<sup>138</sup> PAFO, File R21140, AZ A26085, Berlin, 26.09.1916: IIIb to Military Representative Pera.

German-Ottoman propaganda failed to reach its objectives because the Germans, the Ottomans and the local leaders, whose support the propaganda missions courted, were at cross-purposes. The Ottomans did not trust the Germans and frequently put obstacles in their way. The different German agencies had great difficulties in establishing a working relationship. Finally, most individuals prominently involved in the organisation of German propaganda were unable to ignore issues of social standing when it came to the selection of agents. Therefore the voluntary assistance of individuals, whose knowledge of local conditions would have made them extremely useful propaganda agents was often refused.

## Chapter 6: Results of Intelligence and Propaganda Activities - Reasons for Failure

Max Freiherr von Oppenheim's verdict on his propaganda activities during the First World War in his autobiography was dismissive: they were *ein Schlag ins Wasser*, meaning a futile, meaningless enterprise.<sup>1</sup> This chapter tries to establish whether the baron's view was correct. It attempts to do so by analysing what the results of German and Ottoman propaganda activities were; eventually it also attempts to place the German-Ottoman jihad propaganda within the context of the First World War in general, and tries to find an answer if these activities were ultimately profitable for the Central Powers and the Ottoman Empire or not.

The overall impression at a first glance is that of a failure. There was no jihad, at least not in the sense of far-spread Muslim rebellions in the Entente colonies. The previous chapters have already shown us to a given extent why these rebellions failed to materialise. The Germans and the Ottomans were, in most cases, unable to back their propaganda effort up by force, or even with shipments of weapons and other war materials.

This general pattern held true for most of the target areas of German and Ottoman propaganda. Exceptions from this rule were Libya and Iran. Yet it has to be borne in mind that both countries were already in a state of war or civil war. The Libyans had been fighting the Italians since 1911; in Iran the turmoil created by the tensions between the Shah and the parliament on the one hand and British and especially Russian encroachment on the other had led to a situation resembling civil war. There was no strong or even half-way coherent state authority in either Libya or Iran; the fighting was largely carried out by tribesmen.

In all the areas targeted by propaganda, most importantly Egypt, Iran, the Caucasus and India, the Germans tried to bring about the desired uprisings by cooperation with indigenous nationalists. The Germans were soon to experience the difficulties of sitting between two chairs: that of Ottoman interests on the one hand, and the desires of the nationalists on the other. Furthermore, as the example of Roloff, Neufeld, Stotzingen and Mannesmann showed, German and Ottoman aims were often so different and even opposed that cooperation in the field of propaganda missions became all but impossible.

A third problem concerned money. Where cooperation could not be enforced, it had to be bought. Influential local leaders, ranging from the Shi'ite Mujtahids of Karbala to tribal leaders in Arabia were by no means loath to accept lavish payments of gold, if possible from both sides. In this field the German-Ottoman propaganda effort probably was substantially worse off than the British.

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<sup>1</sup> OPA, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, AB: „Personalities“, 23.



The available numbers show that, even if it failed to achieve its objectives, German-Ottoman *jihad* propaganda was not an economically harmful undertaking for the Central Powers and the Ottoman Empire. From 1914 - 1918, total German war expenditure amounted to 47,000 million dollars or 213,850 million marks; the corresponding sum for the Ottoman war expenditure was 1,100 million dollars or 5,005 million marks.<sup>2</sup> At least 5,000 million marks of the German expenditure went to the Ottoman treasury (to stabilise the Ottoman paper currency and in deliveries of war materials and other goods). Not counted in this sum are the often substantial sums with which the German treasury had to bail out the German railway companies in the Ottoman Empire, who were threatened with bankruptcy by the Ottoman authorities' frequent unwillingness to pay them for military transport.<sup>3</sup> The German expenditure for *jihad* propaganda throughout the war has been estimated at some 50 million marks. To that must be added the budget of the TM, which according to Eşref Kuşçubaşı had some 4 million Ltq. or 80 million marks at its disposal (although by no means all of this money was invested in Pan-Islamic propaganda).<sup>4</sup> Considering that the war lasted for 1560 days (August 2, 1914 - November 9, 1918), and total expenditure for the Central Powers amounted to 61,500 million dollars or 279,824 million marks, daily expenditures for the war effort of the Central Powers amounted to some 179 million marks.<sup>5</sup> Thus the German-Ottoman *jihad* propaganda, even if one takes into account some small contributions made by Austria-Hungary, only cost the equivalent of one day's war expenditure (or 0,06% of the total war expenditure) of the Central Powers.

Even these fairly modest sums the German propagandists often had to wheedle out of a reluctant treasury or ministry of war. It should be noted that the status of most German officials directly involved with the espionage and propaganda effort in the Middle East usually was quite low within the hierarchy of the German Foreign Office or the General Staff. Although, as we have seen, the German government was quite interested to exploit the opportunities a vigorous propaganda campaign in the Middle East seemed to offer (note that Foreign Secretary von Jagow or Kaiser Wilhelm II himself took an interest in the affair) at the beginning of the war the apparent lack of results soon caused that interest to fade. The first signs of this were obvious as early as mid-January 1915. At that time Ernst Jacckh, the highly active promoter of German-Turkish cooperation, pointed out to the Kaiser how useful the extension of the railways within the Ottoman Empire would be for the transport of German troops to the Suez Canal. He met with a rebuff. In no uncertain terms the Kaiser informed

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 337. Exchange rates are given according to Issawi, Charles (ed.): *The Economic History of the Middle East 1800 - 1914*. Chicago 1966, 522. Issawi gives the following exchange rates: 1TL = 18 shillings = \$4,40 = 20 marks.

<sup>3</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 282 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 59.

<sup>5</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 337

Jaeckh that, as far as he (the Kaiser) was concerned, his soldiers had no business there.<sup>6</sup>

While this fading interest of high-ranking German decision-makers certainly had a damaging effect on the German-Ottoman jihad propaganda, the fading interest of indigenous nationalists was a far more serious impediment. A leaflet circulated by the Iranian Ayatollah Kashani early in the war outlined clearly where Germans and nationalists had coinciding interests and what would limit their cooperation; also he addressed the difficulty for a Muslim power to form an alliance with an infidel one:

"O Islamic brothers! Today our Islamic duty, based upon the order of our (Islamic) leaders and the spiritual 'ulama, is to extend a hand of union and alliance to the honourable, exalted government of Germany and the august Ottoman government. Although the honourable government of Germany is a stranger in our holy homeland... nonetheless it is incumbent on all Muslims to serve and support (the Germans)...I state on behalf of all the Hujjat al-Islams that as long as the Germans are kind and in accord with our views, Iranians, cooperation with them is a religious duty and an obligation."<sup>7</sup>

Kashani's last point was the crucial one. The Germans and Ottomans were not kind, and especially the Ottomans, bent on conquest and annexation, were certainly not "in accord with the views" of Iranian, Egyptian or Tripolitanian nationalists. This was a more than valid reason for nationalist leaders both within enemy colonies and in semi-neutral countries not to join a jihad with the Germans and particularly not with the Ottomans. On the other hand we also have to take into account the checks and limitations imposed by the colonial powers on those who were indeed willing to rise in rebellion. As most of the areas dealt with in this study were part of the British Empire only British countermeasures will be dealt with.

It appears that these countermeasures varied both in strictness and in implementation. The British acted most swiftly in areas they considered most sensitive while sometimes considerable time elapsed before countermeasures were taken in regions considered less receptive to jihad propaganda. We have seen that the British lost no time in expelling enemy aliens from Egypt and the Sudan. Neufeld was expelled from the Sudan right after the outbreak of war. Native regiments of the Egyptian army were disarmed and sent to Upper Egypt or the Sudan in the early months of the war. Their officers were forcibly retired

<sup>6</sup> Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 288 – 289.

<sup>7</sup> Kashani-Sabet, *Firoozeh: Frontier Fictions. Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1840 – 1946*. Princeton 1999, 145 – 146.

and put under police surveillance.<sup>8</sup> In other areas, such as India, intellectuals known for their anti-imperialist views, such as the Pan-Islamists Abu-l-Kalam Azad (1888 - 1958) and Muhammad 'Ali (1879 - 1931) were interned and not liberated until late in 1919.<sup>9</sup>

It did not take long for the Germans and Ottomans to find out that the jihad had by no means been enthusiastically received by Muslims both within and without the Ottoman Empire. A short while after Shaykh-ül-Islam Ürgüplü Hayri Bey had proclaimed the holy war in front of the Mehmet Sultan Fatih mosque in Istanbul the first reports by numerous observers began to trickle in as to the results this proclamation had brought about. They were altogether not very encouraging. Almost all outside observers without a direct interest in the continuation of the German-Ottoman Pan-Islamic propaganda effort agreed about the main shortcomings of that endeavour: it appealed to sentiments of Pan-Islamic solidarity (which were often nonexistent or at best weak), and it was not backed by sufficient material support such as weapons, ammunition and money. This situation changed little throughout the four years of war. The prestige, which Germany and the Ottoman Empire undoubtedly won by victories in battles in Europe, Gallipoli and Kut al-Amara was offset by defeats from 1916 onwards. Britain, on the other hand, had a strong military presence in the Middle East and her colonies, and the local populations and notables were unwilling and often unable to challenge Britain's superior position in the region.

There was no shortage of informed criticisms of the German-Ottoman propaganda effort; intelligence gathering in the Middle East might be described as successful to the point that it managed to find out correctly that the local populations were, after a rather short time, war-weary, exhausted, and showed little enthusiasm for if not outright hostility to the Ottoman war effort.

One of the first of these reports came from the Austrian-Hungarian military representative in Istanbul, Field-Marshal-Lieutenant Pomiankowski and excelled both in accuracy and perspicacity. It addressed the prevailing problem of Ottoman and German propaganda. Success of propaganda could only be expected in connection with military victories, without which it was highly improbable that the Muslims would rise against colonial overlords who had just proved their superiority on the battlefield. Enver Paşa's disastrous campaign in the Caucasus in winter 1914 apparently did much to damage Ottoman military credentials. Enver had devised the idea of a quick decisive action in the Caucasus and had not heeded any advice from militarily better qualified quarters such as General Liman von Sanders. He had managed to convince General Bronsart von Schellendorff, his chief-of-staff (whom Pomiankowski appears to have disliked, and consequently described in derogatory terms) of the feasibility of this plan; Pomiankowski did not think it altogether impossible that

<sup>8</sup> PAFO, File R21126, No. A24426, Berlin, 10.12.1914, Rifat to German Foreign Office.

<sup>9</sup> May, Lini S.: *The Evolution of Indian Muslim Thought after 1857*. Lahore 1970, 187, 196.

Bronsart's backing of Enver was part of his ongoing intrigue against Liman, whom Bronsart wished to replace as head of the German military mission. The defeat at Sarikamış was, in Pomiankowski's opinion, sufficient to produce a serious loss of face for Enver in the eyes of Ottoman public opinion and also in the Muslim world. Still more dangerous were the insufficient forces which were about to attack the Suez Canal; a defeat on the Canal would lead directly to "a collapse of the Islamic movement in Arabia, Africa and India as well to revolution in Turkey."<sup>10</sup>

At the end of February 1915, Pomiankowski was able to draw a brief resumé of the results of the proclamation of jihad. They were quite disappointing. Some Muslim troops in the Russian army had mutinied; so had some North African and Indian troops in France, who had to be sent to other theatres of war. News in the Ottoman press about Islamic revolts in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, India and Iran had to be taken with a pinch of salt. Pomiankowski offered a convincing explanation for this failure: Islam, "like Christendom", was split into many different sects; many of those did not recognise the sultan-caliph as their spiritual overlord. Any movement against the Entente powers was to be ascribed to nationalist or economic reasons, not religious ones. In areas where local notables had accepted colonial rule and the population was treated decently by the colonising powers, a proclamation of jihad could be expected to be ignored completely<sup>11</sup>. Pomiankowski also addressed the main difficulty the German and Ottoman propagandists had to cope with: it was simply often impossible to provide armaments and funds for the potential rebels, due to difficulties of transport and enemy watchfulness.

Yet, even more serious was the aversion of Muslim populations to rise against well armed and well-led colonial troops, even in areas where these were greatly outnumbered. According to Enver Paşa 3,000 Russian cossacks were sufficient to keep down the Muslim population in northern Iran. A minor rebellion, which had broken out late in 1914 had been defeated by the cossacks with ease and the city of Tabriz reoccupied. The cruel vengeance wreaked by the Russians after the revolt made a repetition of it highly unlikely.<sup>12</sup>

The conflict of interests between the Ottomans and the respective nationalists in the areas to be "liberated" was another serious obstacle for the outbreak of rebellions. The nationalists (Pomiankowski quoted the Georgians, but the same pattern was observable in areas like Egypt or Tripolitania) desired national independence, not Ottoman conquest; the Ottomans often gave short shrift to such notions and behaved like an occupying force, especially in western

<sup>10</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/8, Res.No.25, Istanbul, 14.01.1915: Pomiankowski to General Staff, Vienna.

<sup>11</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/19, Istanbul, 25.02.1915: Pomiankowski to General Staff Vienna, concerning "The Holy War" [hereafter The Holy War], 2.

<sup>12</sup> The Holy War, 3.

Iran. Any display of enthusiasm for the Turkish invasion by the local population was pure lip-service. The Iranian tribes felt too weak to fight the Turks, did not want to lose their possessions and least of all their subsidies from the British.<sup>13</sup>

The blame for the lack of success lay not only with cowardice or opportunism by local populations. The Ottomans had, before the war, often managed to alienate local notables who saw no reason at all to join forces with the Ottomans against states that many of them bore little, if any, grudge. Arabia was deeply split into the rival factions of Ibn Sa'ud, Ibn Rashid of the Shammar and the followers of Sharif Husayn of Mecca. The Arabian traveller Dr. Alois Musil had been sent to Arabia in order to try to reconcile the rival factions and to urge them to join the jihad; all that had been achieved was a grudging commitment to neutrality, and not active support by the Arabian leaders. Even in those areas where Ottoman control was quite strong, such as the Hijaz, Yemen and Asir, the local leaders had refused to become involved in the Holy War.

Still Pomiankowski regarded the proclamation of jihad as necessary. The Turkish forces in Iraq had not been attacked, the Ottoman army corps that had invaded Iran had enjoyed some easy successes without encountering too much resistance and some trouble had been created in the British, French and Russian armies. The great breakthrough, Pomiankowski believed, could only come once the Germans and the Austrians had achieved victory in Europe.<sup>14</sup>

The German military representative in Mesopotamia from 1915 - 1917, General Oscar Gressmann, also commented negatively on the results of German and Ottoman propaganda in the Arab provinces. In Iraq, according to Gressmann, the proclamation could not have held any sway as the population was religiously too diverse (the majority of southern Iraqis being Shi'ite). Gressmann's observation are particularly interesting as the general also was able to witness the results of German-Ottoman propaganda on non-Ottoman territory, namely in Iran. There had been three main obstacles for the success of the propaganda effort. First, the country was not sufficiently centralised, and the government lacked power in the provinces. The second reason was "Persian nationalism", which prevented any feeling of solidarity with the Ottomans. Finally there was a shortage of armaments and troops. This made successful campaigning against the British in the south and the Russians in the north impossible. Equally serious were the bad relations between the Germans and the Turks; while the Germans pretended to advocate the liberation of Iran, the commander of the Ottoman army of invasion, Rauf Bey, openly referred to Iran as a "hostage" and expressed continuously the Turkish intention to annex at least Azerbaijan, if not the entire country, after the British and the Russians had been defeated. Rauf expressed his appreciation for German funds but stressed

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<sup>13</sup> The Holy War, 4 - 5.

<sup>14</sup> The Holy War, 7-9.

also that the Iranian campaign was solely an Ottoman undertaking in which he would not brook any German interference.<sup>15</sup>

Some further explanation why German and Ottoman propaganda failed to produce the desired results is offered by the Mahdiya movement in the Sudan from 1881 – 1898. At the time of its outbreak the Sudan was suffering under a rapacious and tyrannical domination by Egypt. The occupying forces, however, were badly equipped, worse led and increasingly suffered from neglect once the 'Urabi revolt in Egypt had broken out and the Egyptian authorities had more pressing matters on their plate. Second, the Sudan was a remote area, and in its social organisation overwhelmingly tribal. The tribal chiefs had never been happy to render allegiance to any established authority. Internecine fighting and raiding was a well-established way of life, and to concentrate these energies on those unfortunate enough to be termed "infidels" therefore did not manifest a great departure from tradition. Third, the Mahdi himself was a charismatic individual, remarkably capable of exercising both spiritual and temporal leadership. Last, his philosophy had been simple, but convincing for the Sudanese Muslims: purification of Islam, jihad against the infidels with the aim of liberating "Dar al-Islam" from alien oppressors. The fact that "Dar al-Islam" was in this case the home territory of the *milcahidin* was an additional benefit.

None of these conditions applied to the jihad proclaimed by the Ottomans in 1914. The colonial armies were well-equipped and well-led; social structures in many of the countries German-Ottoman jihad propaganda targeted were not tribal, but sedentary and concerned for stability. Much to their chagrin, neither Enver Paşa nor any other leader of the CUP could be described as a charismatic personality capable of influencing Muslims all over the world. And finally, the political interests of the Ottoman Empire and Germany gave the jihad propaganda a tinge of duplicity right from the beginning and made it difficult, if not impossible, for Muslims to believe in its sincerity.

One result of German and Ottoman Pan-Islamic propaganda was to raise the awareness of the Entente powers that the loyalty of their Muslim troops might be subverted and that this had to be countered by according good treatment to them and catering for their religious needs. In June 1916 Professor Hartmann somewhat wryly reported on the fervent activities of the French who previously had "only shown contempt for Islam" and were now suddenly engaged in a major campaign to "attract the love of the Muslims." The French had to catch up in this field, as they had continuously given support to the Arab Christians. The Muslim Arabs, according to Hartmann, had always realised the imperialist ambitions of France, and admiration for France was confined to the fields of education and culture. No Muslim had publicly declared his support for France at the outbreak of the war.

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<sup>15</sup> FA/MA, File MSg2/4865: Memorandum by Oscar Gressmann, Excellency, General and Paşa, former German military representative in Mesopotamia, 1917.

To counter this unsatisfactory situation two newspapers had been founded in France: *Les Amitiés Musulmanes* (first published December 15, 1915) and *Al-Mustaqbal* (first published March 1, 1916). In its first editorials *Les Amitiés Musulmanes* set out to give information and support to Muslims, to spread the noble ideas of freedom of thought and culture (embedded in the French national ideal), and to create facilities for Muslims in France to follow their religious obligations. Its editorship was prominent: president of honour was the prime minister of France, assisted by the chief ministers and a large number of French and Muslim intellectuals. The *Mustaqbal*, on the other hand, was edited by a Syrian Christian and advocated strongly anti-Ottoman positions. The style of its articles was "Islamic", that was to say Qur'anic quotations were frequently used, mostly in order to demonstrate that even early Islam had condemned the Turks as barbarians. France was lauded as the "protector of justice and truth, land of progress in all areas." She had given sanctuary to such noble individuals as Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and Adib Ishaq in the past. It was noteworthy that the celebrities not only included the prominent Muslims Afghani and 'Abduh, but also the Lebanese Christian Ishaq. *Al-Mustaqbal* accused the Ottomans of tyrannic rule in the Arab provinces and of deliberate marginalisation of Arab officials. Hartmann was not impressed by this attempt at French counter-propaganda, yet in his conclusion he unwittingly pointed out the shortcomings of German and Ottoman propaganda. The propaganda was, in his opinion, useless; the wavering would not be convinced, and the "language of reality", such as stability, order and security, of which Cemal Paşa spoke, was far more powerful than any French baiting of Muslim opinion with reference to "French civilisation." Last, the French propaganda effort was simply based on money; the "support" the newspapers declared for France was simply bought with generous French subsidies; the British had, for a prolonged period of time, availed themselves of this handy tool in Egypt; yet the credibility of such publications was, "even for the uneducated", obviously nil.<sup>16</sup>

For the educated and uneducated alike there were hardly any differences between German, Ottoman, British or French propaganda, which altogether suffered from the same difficulties and were therefore similarly unsuccessful. Local notables or populations could not be made to join the war on one side or the other simply through propaganda; they might be bought, but best of all was, what Hartmann had called the "language of reality": visible force. While it was available and used to good effect by the Ottoman authorities in the Arab provinces, it was manifestly absent in Entente colonies. Eşref Kuşçubaşı clearly recognised this shortcoming and commented rather acidly:

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<sup>16</sup> PAFO, File R1523, Berlin, 03.06.1916: Article for the *Neuer Orient*: "The Courting of Islam by the French" by Martin Hartmann.

"I have never seen a proclamation that could stop a bullet... The Ottoman Turks, with or without a holy war, would not have hesitated to make any sacrifices that would have been required. We were used to dying in wars we usually lost even before the shooting started...As for the Arabs within the Empire, few would be willing to help us no matter how many holy wars were declared. Those other Muslims would not have understood what it was all about anyway. No one could read the proclamations either. Although the Turks bore the brunt of the defences of the country, the proclamations were not even written in understandable Turkish!<sup>17</sup>...The Muslims who were supposed to help us, even if they wanted to, were either too weak to enter the war, or under the domination of the Entente, or like Persia, too deeply involved in their own national struggles. Even in those areas where Britain and France were extremely unpopular, for example in North Africa, our successes were very modest. Even Muslims within the Empire fought against us when they felt they could get away with it, as was the case with Sharif Husayn's "Arab Revolt." Others, like Ibn al-Sa'ud, worked for our enemies by not working for us. The anticipated revolts in Entente colonies, particularly in the key area of Egypt, never took place...and no sizable number of Muslims serving in the Entente armies deserted to us, although a greater number of Arab soldiers in our army went over to the British...Large numbers of Indian Muslims fought against us with gusto in Iraq and Sinai."<sup>18</sup>

The two statements of Eşref Kuşçubaşı manifest an excellent summary of the shortcomings and the results of Pan-Islamic propaganda in the Middle East and other largely Muslim-populated areas. The propagandists either misconceived entirely where popular loyalties lay, or to which extent "loyal" people were prepared to fight for the cause "of Islam." Propaganda, just like espionage, suffered from manifold deficiencies both in regard to organisation and distribution and to the personalities of the individuals involved. Departmental, professional and even personal rivalries and jealousies greatly hampered the efficiency of the propaganda machine; in general personal interests among the propagandists, especially the "oriental" ones, appear to have had far greater importance than an interest in the success of the propaganda effort.

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<sup>17</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 41ff.

<sup>18</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 41.



## Results of German Propaganda

Cooperation with the various national committees of exiled Egyptian, Indian and Georgian nationalists was, on the whole, neither satisfying for the Germans, nor for the national committees. As far as the German-financed propaganda of the committees was concerned, the problem was insufficient information and organisation on the side of the Germans. There was no shortage of information about their Ottoman allies' reluctant support for Iranian nationalist propaganda and independent German operations in Iran such as the Niedermayer/von Hentig expedition to Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> A meeting of German ambassador Wangenheim, the Iranian ambassador, Enver Paşa, Field Marshal von der Goltz and a Swedish officer having previously commanded an Iranian gendarmerie detachment indicates the problems the Germans were suffering from in their operations in Iran. The Ottoman sub-commanders in western Iran often behaved aggressively and failed to consult the Iranian authorities. Some German officers should have been sent to work as liaison officers between the Ottoman troops and the Iranian authorities. Had these liaison officers been available the Germans also might have reaped a more tangible benefit: their expeditions had continuously been treated badly by Ottoman officials and officers, they had frequently only been allowed to continue their travels after long delays and much of their equipment had disappeared. Ambassador Wangenheim and Enver Paşa agreed about a shared command of the expeditions; the German military attaché was to communicate the instructions of the Ottoman General Headquarters to the expeditions; thus they were still under German command, but under firm Ottoman control.<sup>20</sup>

German-financed nationalist propaganda also ran into difficulties with Ottoman censorship. Back from a journey to Constantinople, Mr. Hedayat, editor of the Persian propaganda newspaper *Kaveh*, informed Professor Mittwoch that the distribution of the newspaper was thoroughly insufficient; this was blamed on the censorship. The censors appear to have worked slowly, so that the newspaper was considerably delayed; and even if the Istanbul censors were eventually pleased, it had happened that Halil Paşa in Baghdad had prohibited the newspaper's distribution on his own initiative. The reasons behind these obstacles were not difficult to uncover. Hedayat and the Persian Committee advocated an independent Iran. The Ottoman government, on the other hand, was interested in annexing one or more provinces of Iran and, if possible, even the entire country. Mr. Hedayat had discussed the problems of his

<sup>19</sup> See Niedermayer, Oskar Ritter von: *Im Weltkrieg vor Indiens Toren, der Wüstenzug der deutschen Expedition nach Persien und Afghanistan*. 5th ed. Hamburg 1942; Vogel, Renate: *Die Persien- und Afghanistanexpedition Oskar Ritter von Niedermayers*, Osnabrück 1976.

<sup>20</sup> WAV, File 47 - 1/12, Res.No.94, Istanbul, 18.02.1915: Pomiankowski to Austrian Ministry of War.

newspaper with Ali Bash Hamba, a Tunisian member of the IOFE, who also edited the *Revue du Maghrib* in Geneva. Bash Hamba had reprimanded Hedayat that his committee should not work from Berlin, but from Istanbul or Iran. In his opinion, the fact that the *Kaveh* was published in Berlin was the reason for the newspaper's difficulties in Turkey, as "foreign newspapers were strictly forbidden." On Hedayat's counterargument that German and Austrian newspapers were freely available, Bash Hamba reacted with surprise: "Yes, of course, but these are newspapers from *allied* countries!" We do not know, how well Bash Hamba was informed about Ottoman intentions, but it is highly probably that his remark to Hedayat was a slip of the tongue; however, his hint at different German and Ottoman war aims, and the difficulties arising for propaganda thereof, seems to have fallen on deaf ears.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless German and, to a lesser extent, Ottoman propaganda was able to score at least some success. Mostly the damage done to the Entente was negligible, and the revolts or rebellions were put under control after a short time. One such example was that of Sultan 'Ali Dinar of Darfur. He had long been vying with the Sanusiya over pre-eminence in the far west of his territories, but eventually decided to take up arms against the British himself. In April 1916 his rebellion started; it came at a fairly inopportune moment as far as the British were concerned, for the Sanusiya was attacking central and southern Egypt.<sup>22</sup>

But Ali Dinar's troops, mostly armed with spears, swords and shield, were no match for the British expeditionary force dispatched to Darfur to deal with him. In May 1916 a decisive battle was fought some 150 miles from Ali Dinar's capital al-Fasher. The sultan himself was killed and his army routed - "probably the most remote and most isolated campaign to be fought during the war", as a contemporary British observer noted.

### Reasons for Failure - the Germans

Altogether one has to conclude that German propaganda was a failure - that is to say it failed to produce the desired results. Two factors suggest themselves as main reasons for this failure. First, German propaganda was forced to operate with limited funds, more limited muscle and, most grievous of all, limited knowledge about the target areas and the peoples inhabiting them. The blame for this has to be laid at the feet of the nature of some sectors of German society, notably the military authorities and the German Foreign Office, and of the shortage of skilled personnel in sufficiently influential positions. As Lieven has noted, Germany in general and Prussia in particular had escaped the general

<sup>21</sup> PAFO, File R21140, AZ zu A30127, Berlin, 25.09.16, Mittwoch to Foreign Office.

<sup>22</sup> PAFO, File R21139, AZ A10238, Berne, 17.04.16: Romberg (ambassador) to Bethmann-Hollweg.

trend of replacing the aristocracy with the bourgeoisie as the backbone of the state system. A trend towards "democratisation", especially in the economic sector, was definitely observable; late nineteenth/early twentieth century Germany was a marvellous breeding ground for a skilled technical and economic elite largely rooted in the emerging middle-class bourgeoisie, but the officer corps and the higher echelons of the Foreign Service were still aristocratically dominated. The men in responsible positions were marked by a strong commitment to class privileges and preservation of elitist positions; in their opinion, background mattered more than education or skill.<sup>23</sup>

Considering this situation, it is not surprising that the intellectual framework of German propaganda was often deficient. What made matters worse was the refusal to accept the services and, more importantly, the criticism levelled against the German propaganda effort by individuals, who possessed knowledge of the target areas of German-Ottoman propaganda, but were not of a sufficiently high social standing to be deemed "reliable." The academics, who enjoyed a certain status due to their positions as professors (in fact one may argue that they constituted a parallel-aristocracy) had, as already pointed out, suspended their disbelief in Pan-Islam at the outbreak of war. In their opinion, harsh criticism of the German propaganda effort in the Middle East could be interpreted as defeatism. Thus the academics took part, in many cases against better knowledge (and in some cases even against published better knowledge) in a propaganda effort they either knew or felt was doomed to failure.

Much more criticism came from agents in the field. But criticism from their side could easily be dismissed by reference to their lower social standing. There was no shortage of volunteers for propaganda or intelligence work. Instead of being gratefully accepted, these individuals were frequently cross-examined in a professionally and personally desultory manner; many of them complained later of having been treated high-handedly. This was particularly common when Oppenheim had been charged with selecting an agent. The baron's position in the Foreign Service and the ambitions he desired to fulfil with his propaganda institutions seriously compromised his objectivity.

### The Performance of Ottoman Intelligence and Propaganda

It is difficult to estimate the successes and failures of the TM and Ottoman intelligence and propaganda in general. Their goals and aims were usually overambitious, and the means with which to achieve them too limited for the set task; but equally often they were cunningly executed, and the men who executed them can only be described as a group of tough and resourceful adventurers. They overestimated the appeal of Pan-Islamic propaganda both within the Ottoman Empire and Entente Muslim colonies (though less so than

<sup>23</sup> Lieven, Dominic: *The Aristocracy in Europe 1815 – 1914*. London 1992, 199.

the Germans), and regarded irregular troops as more useful than they really were.<sup>24</sup> Still the TM contributed considerably to the painful realisation for the British that the Ottoman Empire proved a surprisingly tough nut to crack. But overall, in a war where superiority of manpower and supplies led to inevitable, if slow, victory, organisations such as the TM could only have a very limited effect.

The TM throughout the war saw service on all fronts. In Tripolitania it was particularly successful. The TM officers who went out to Tripolitania in 1914 continued where they had let off in 1912. Now there was only one difficulty: the Ottoman government, and especially the Germans, wanted the Sanusiya to march on Egypt and fight the British, due to Italy still being a member of the Triple Alliance in 1914 and early 1915. Therefore, legally speaking, it was an ally of the Ottoman Empire. However, the Sanusiya and the Ottoman officers sent out to fight with its irregular forces appear not to have paid overmuch attention to this fact (in wise foresight); the Germans, on the other hand, indeed made a concerted effort to keep the Sanusiya from fighting against the Italians, doubtlessly for fear of losing Italy as an ally. The German activities resulted in a brief spell of armistice, when Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif, the leader of the Sanusiya, declared that he was prepared to accept the reign of the king of Italy and would now fight against the British, the true enemies of Islam. Very little value can be given to this statement. It calmed the Germans, maintained the flow of money and weapons, and in July 1915 the rather convenient entry of Italy on the Entente side terminated at least this minor diplomatic muddle. The Sanusi forces had some successes against the British, and quite numerous ones against the Italians. The western Egyptian harbour of al-Salum was conquered in autumn 1915 (lost again in February/March 1916), and at the end of the war, when the Sanusiya had already made their peace with the British and the French, the Italians were in the same situation as in 1912: their army was garrisoned in fortified positions along the coast, while the interior was dominated by the Sanusiya.

During 1916, the TM had contrived to carry out an ambitious scheme. It attempted to link the struggle of the Sanusiya with that of 'Ali Dinar, sultan of Darfur in south-western Sudan. The latter had for a considerable time upheld fairly good relations with the British and paid an annual tribute. In 1914, due to a promise of assistance by Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif, he stopped doing so and proclaimed his independence. TM agents instructed him to proclaim holy war, which he did in April 1915. The support promised by the TM and the Sanusiya, however, failed to materialise, and in November 1916 an Anglo-Sudanese force was able to crush his rebellion;<sup>25</sup> the sultan himself was killed in this battle. The last act of Ottoman-Sanusi cooperation which was organised by the TM in 1918

<sup>24</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 159.

<sup>25</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 98.

was the invitation of Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif to Istanbul, whence Enver Paşa planned to send him on a propaganda mission to the as yet unoccupied parts of the Arab provinces. The plan was vetoed by Sultan Mehmed VI in July 1918. As a conclusion the operations in Tripolitania had clearly shown that a group of zealots could, with the help of irregular troops, make a considerable nuisance of themselves for European colonial forces, but were ultimately unable to achieve anything of lasting impact. Still their efforts did not go by unnoticed. A British observer noted:

"In some respects this was the most successful strategical move made by our enemies of the whole war, for these odd thousand rather verminous Arabs tied up on the Western Frontier for over a year some 30,000 troops badly needed elsewhere and caused us to expend on desert railways, desert cars, transports etc. sufficient to add 2d. to the income tax for the lifetime of the present generation."<sup>26</sup>

TM activities in other areas were less successful. A TM force under Mümtaz Bey was able to seize al-Nakhl in central Sinai during the first Suez Canal campaign. In the battle itself, the TM played only a minor role. After the end of the campaign the TM was ordered to remain in the Canal Zone and to disrupt shipping in the Canal by sniping, machine-gunning or the laying of mines. Although the supply of mines was quickly exhausted, the TM agents discovered that the British were extremely anxious and could be considerably delayed by sighting wooden crates floating on the Canal. The mining activities (this time with real mines) was resumed and extended in summer 1915, one vessel was sunk and the Canal Company suspended night travel on the Canal.<sup>27</sup> Although at times the lightning raids by TM commandos into Egypt caused considerable apprehension for the British authorities, they could not be a cure for the main problem of Ottoman warfare against the British in Egypt: it was simply not possible with the manpower and resources available to the Ottoman army to transport troops and guns in sufficient quantities across Sinai. This also, together with the harsh security measures imposed by the British, prevented a rebellion within Egypt; there was no organisation which could have set up a rebellion of its own accord and stood a chance of success. The end of offensive operations came after the battle of Romani in August 1916; from then on, the Ottoman forces were pitched in a defensive position against the advancing British forces and continuously forced to retreat.

The TM operations in Iraq had even less impact on the course of the war. Major Süleyman Askari Bey, then deputy director of the TM (under Enver

<sup>26</sup> Jarvis, C.S.: *Three Deserts*, London 1936, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 109.

Paşa), was sent to Iraq as commander of the 38th division. His task was to prevent a further British advance to the north and to retake Basrah, for which purpose he was to recruit an army of bedouin irregulars. Although it was doubtful if such undisciplined forces could hold their own against the better trained and numerically superior British forces, the Turks had no alternative. Süleyman Askari Bey vigorously pursued his objective. His agents spread gold and propaganda material among the tribes in order to recruit them as *mülcahidin*, in the (mistaken) assumption that they would make up what they lacked in training, equipment and discipline with religious fervour.<sup>28</sup> This assumption was not so much based on naiveté as on the consideration that the tribesmen represented the only available military force, that they were comparably cheap to equip and train, and that they were expendable.

As early as September 1914 Enver Paşa had attempted to win the support of Ibn Sa'ud through the offices of Sayyid Talib al-Naqib of Basrah. Although Ibn Sa'ud promised to stay at peace with Ibn Rashid of Hail for the duration of the war, it has already been pointed out that he shrewdly maintained a position on the fence. For most influential potentates in the Arabian Peninsula this was a typical behaviour during the war. Enver Paşa had sent out telegrams to the Arab leaders calling for war against Britain. As a result, the sons of these leaders had travelled to Istanbul and assured the Ottoman minister of war of the complete cooperation of their fathers. The most important ones were Ibn Sa'ud, Ibn Rashid, Sayyid Idris of Asir and Imam Yahya of Yemen.<sup>29</sup> With the support of these tribal leaders Süleyman Askari Bey managed to recruit a force of some 17,000 Arab and Kurdish *mülcahidin*. The hope that these irregular forces might prevail against the numerically superior British troops were shattered in the battle of Shu'aybah Forest on April 12 - 14, 1915. The irregulars, many of them without firing a single shot, took to flight; Süleyman Askari regarded this as a personal failure and committed suicide.<sup>30</sup>

This catastrophe led the TM leaders to some painful, but nevertheless correct conclusions, which could have saved the Germans a great deal of money and effort and prevented them from continuing to pursue such objectives. The TM realised that it took more than irregular forces to dislodge a European occupying army from anywhere in the Middle East. More importantly, in the words of Eşref Kuşcubaşı,

"...the tribesmen were practical people who fought for or against, or remained neutral toward, those with the most money to spend and the best chance of success. They quickly abandoned

<sup>28</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 123.

<sup>29</sup> PAFO, File R21123, A20360, 04.09.15: Report by ambassador Wangenheim about visit of the sons of tribal leaders at the Ottoman ministry of war.

<sup>30</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 127.

a losing cause. Most of them preferred to remain uninvolved, awaiting patiently the outcome of an alien war. We spent plenty of money... the British spent more, and we lost more battles than they did."<sup>31</sup>

The last realisation was probably the most crushing one: for the tribes, the Ottoman Empire, like the British, was an alien power. Had they been bribed skilfully with promises or money, and been confronted with impressive Ottoman victories, they might eventually have been won over to support the Ottomans actively. The lack of all three factors made the attempt to rally large tribal army a dream impossible to realise.

Besides assisting the Ottoman army in military operations, the TM played a prominent role in maintaining Ottoman national security in the Arab provinces. The problems facing the Ottoman government in doing so seemed initially overwhelming. Without maintaining control of the Hijaz, communications with Yemen could not be upheld; and without command of the Syrian lines of communication, Arabia in general was lost. A huge area, almost half the size of the Empire, was to be defended by about 24,000 men, mostly garrisoned along the Hijaz railway and important towns, with a substantial percentage holed up in Medina. Stoddard is absolutely correct to state that the policies pursued by the CUP towards the Arabs were often unclear, ill-defined or ill-conceived. The sedentarisation of tribes was supported, as was the attempt to break up tribal confederations by playing one leader off against another. Means of communications, such as roads and railways, were improved and newly constructed in order to make possible the exertion of control in hitherto inaccessible areas. Additional garrisons and settlements of loyal communities, such as Circassian and Tripolitanian *muhajirs* (refugees) were created all over the Arab provinces. In order to counteract the resentment its Turkifying and centralising policies might incite, the CUP conducted, even in peace time, a fervent Pan-Islamic propaganda.<sup>32</sup> By and large, these policies were successful, the revolt in the Hijaz being the only major exemption of the rule, but it has already been pointed out that the Ottoman government did not regard this as a serious threat to Ottoman cohesion in general, in which it was justified. Eşref Kuşçubaşı noted that the CUP handled the Arab question unsatisfactorily, especially in the years before the First World War. While being able to retain a certain amount of loyalty in tribal areas, the Ottoman government fared worse with the "relatively sophisticated Arabs in the Syrian provinces."<sup>33</sup> This is probably explicable from the respective demands formulated by different Arab leaders.

<sup>31</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 129.

<sup>32</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 133 – 134.

<sup>33</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 136.

In order to preserve the peace at comparably low cost the Ottoman authorities usually preferred negotiations to a show of force. While the demands of tribal leaders most often concerned matters of taxation or recruitment, the demands of the proto-nationalist Arab elite in Syria were more difficult to meet, especially when faced with the problem of European aggression which seemed to necessitate the maintenance of internal cohesion at all cost. There is very little doubt that the CUP leaders coming into power in 1913 regarded the proposals of local autonomy for the Arab provinces made by their opposition in 1912 as tantamount to Ottoman suicide. Still the *vilayet* law of March 1913 gave the Arab provinces, as well as the Armenians or other Christian minorities, a fair degree of autonomy, outside of financial, military and foreign policy matters. In theory it was a shrewd law, which might have soothed local grievances and thus indirectly have increased governmental authority. Cemal Paşa certainly regarded it in this light, but added that the Arab leaders could not bring themselves to trust the CUP. Cohesion in the Arab provinces would, therefore, have to be maintained by force.<sup>34</sup>

Cemal Paşa's measures to maintain Ottoman national security have often been regarded as the reason for the growing Arab estrangement from the Ottoman state. However, their impact appears sometimes exaggerated. The estrangement is far more likely ascribable to two other factors: first, the First World War confronted far more than any previous conflict the Arab population especially of Syria and Lebanon with deprivation and famine on a hitherto unknown scale.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, a point is to be made in favour of pragmatism as the real political motivating force. As long as Ottoman authority was strong (or at least existent), local populations adapted to it; once it was gone, they readjusted to a changed situation.<sup>36</sup> According to Eşref Kuşçubaşı, the main mistake made by the CUP made was their failure to implement "firm and just policies"; they gave too much autonomy before, and were consequently forced to appear too repressive during the war period. This appears credible; Cemal Paşa's measures in Syria were harsh and alienated the Syrian population, but succeeded in keeping Syria and Lebanon calm throughout the war.

In spite of all this the TM operations, both in terms of scope and success, represented one of the most skilful examples of intelligence work to be found in the Middle East during the Great War. The men working for it had a vague view of the future of the Ottoman state, and often lost their lives in defending a state system "they scarcely understood or perhaps cared little about." The last word about the matter should be given to Eşref Kuşçubaşı:

<sup>34</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 137.

<sup>35</sup> Schatkowski-Schilcher, Linder: *The Famine of 1915 - 1918 in Greater Syria*, in Spagnolo, John: *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective*, Reading 1992, 229 - 258.

<sup>36</sup> See Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 222 - 240, especially 238.



**"None of us had anything to lose. We were convinced that our cause was just and that our efforts were important. We tended to ignore the fact that we could not win in the end. At best we could have attained a few more minor victories before our world collapsed about us at the end of the war."<sup>37</sup>**

### **Comparison - The Results of British Intelligence and Propaganda Operations:**

**In order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the German and Ottoman propaganda effort in the First World War it is useful to compare the results of this effort with British experiences in the same field. This comparison leads to the conclusion that the British, both with regard to their intelligence and to their propaganda efforts fared not much better than the Germans and the Ottomans, and for strikingly similar reasons. As a rule, Britain underrated both the will and the capacity of the Ottoman forces to resist. Its exaggerated expectations from exploiting the rifts between Arabs and Turks were likewise frustrated.<sup>38</sup>**

**The home government in London was ill-supplied with accurate information from the Middle East. There appears to have been an overwhelming trust in the high esteem Britain was held in by the Ottomans and no anticipation at all that the Ottoman Empire might conclude an alliance with Germany and become a hostile power if alienated by the British. In the opinion of British decision-makers at the time even this development would not have mattered greatly; the Ottoman armed forces were regarded as negligible. Therefore, during the first two years of the war, Britain hoped to win impressive victories "on the cheap", already with the side-interest to bolster up British morale at home by acquiring military success in the Middle East.<sup>39</sup> Intelligence, in the sense of gathering political or military information, played a very limited role during this phase and, if carried out at all, was so faulty and insufficient that it was unable to contribute to the prevention of two serious defeats, as the tenacity and skill of the Ottoman armed forces had been grossly underrated (Gallipoli and Kut al-Amara).**

**As Britain soon found out it was in a precarious situation with regard to troops and equipment in the Middle Eastern war theatre until summer 1916. As a result, political intelligence gathering networks were built up, with the aim of finding useful allies within the Ottoman Empire, most notably the Arab Bureau in Cairo; the government of India had already during 1915 sent out intelligence officers like captains Leachman and Shakespear to powerful local leaders in**

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<sup>37</sup> Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs*, 160.

<sup>38</sup> Lieven, *The Aristocracy in Europe*, 77 – 78.

<sup>39</sup> Porter, *Britain and the Middle East in the First World War*, 166.

Mesopotamia and Eastern Arabia on missions to attract their support. The fact that the Arab bureau and the intelligence officers in Mesopotamia were not under a unified leadership led to British intelligence in the Middle East being hampered by bureaucratic confusion. There was the fundamental difference of opinion between Simla and Cairo which aims to pursue with regard to Arab aspirations to national independence. The Government of India regarded control of Mesopotamia as vital for the security of India, and advocated its incorporation into the British Empire with the same administrative status as an Indian province. It objected to any promises of autonomy, let alone independence, to Mesopotamian leaders. In contrast, the British authorities in Cairo, particularly the rather motley assembly of Orientalists later to become known as the "Arab Bureau", supported an agreement with Sharif Husayn of Mecca, who demanded the establishment of an independent Arab kingdom as the price for an "Arab" revolt against the Ottomans.

The real problem for the British war effort did not lie in the question of how to gather intelligence, but how to interpret it. At times this problem led to considerable discord between British politicians and strategists. There were often great differences of opinion what to make of the gathered intelligence and how to use it for successful military operations. In the aftermath of the war much of this squabbling was papered over by depicting a unanimous agreement between all individuals concerned. Turkey's entry into the war on the German side was concluded to have been inevitable and accorded to continuous German intriguing in the Ottoman Empire since 1875. Furthermore, Ottoman measures taken in the immediate pre-war period, which might well have originated with perfectly legitimate interests to bolster up Ottoman national security, such as the strengthening of Ottoman forces in lower Mesopotamia, were shown as indicating an unfriendly attitude to Britain and proving Ottoman commitment to the cause of the Central Powers.<sup>40</sup> The British official attitude was that Turkey's neutrality was only pretended even before Turkey entered the war, and Turkish actions were deliberately projected in that light. Thus the British exhibited precisely the same flaw as their German counterparts: intelligence work was not conceived as the gathering of information on which then to base one's operations and strategies, but as supporting the war effort, while the official opinion of the state of affairs in the Near East and the entire Muslim world was already made up. Apparently it did not occur to anybody in an official position to conceive that Turkey had genuine grievances, and that what the British called "strictly precautionary measures" - such as impounding two battleships ordered and paid for by Ottoman public subscription, or sending of an expeditionary

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<sup>40</sup> This was included into the Official History of the War in the Air: "Before Turkey entered the war in October 1914 she gave evidence of hostility to Great Britain and among other acts she strengthened her forces in Lower Mesopotamia." See Andrews, *Intelligence and International Relations*, 83.

force to Fao on the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab, could be interpreted as proof that Britain only waited for an occasion to strike a blow at the Ottoman Empire's "soft underbelly."<sup>41</sup>

The British fear of Ottoman-German Pan-Islamic propaganda was one of the most persistent factors in shaping British policies towards the Ottoman Empire. Ironically this might be interpreted as almost the only real success of this propaganda campaign. The advocates of military action in the Middle East would probably have been hard-pressed to overcome official opinion still strongly in favour of concentrating efforts on the Western Front, if it would not have been seen as necessary to curb pan-Islamic propaganda right from the outset with a show of force.<sup>42</sup> The perceived danger in pan-Islam also led to the first suggestions of support for Arab aspirations of national independence, although in 1914 Sir Arthur Hirtzel, political secretary of the India office, pointed out that while such an option certainly looked promising it might also yield potential dangers, for Hirtzel was "...not sure that in the long run the Arabs will not be more dangerous propagandists of Pan-Islam than the Turks."<sup>43</sup> As it turned out Sir Arthur's objections were eventually ignored and Britain entered into a series of commitments (first to Arab independence, then to France and eventually to Zionism) which proved disastrous in the long run. Like the Germans, the British suffered from a lack of individuals whose qualified and sober analysis might have dampened the enthusiasm to adopt such schemes. Their benefits were doubtful and the total cost, militarily and politically, as it turned out, prohibitive.

Support for the Arab cause did not only originate with the desire to counter the potential danger of Ottoman pan-Islamic propaganda. It was also attractive due to its potential to shorten the war in the Middle East and deliver cheap victories, which were needed at a time when repeated attacks on the Western Front ended only in bloodshed on a hitherto unknown scale with very little to show in return for these sacrifices. A memorandum by Gertrude Bell of October 5, 1916, sums up neatly how beneficial such a course of action could turn out for the British war effort in the Middle East. She pointed out that although Turkish rule in Arabia from the outside looked orderly and thorough,

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<sup>41</sup> A further proof of Britain indeed being prejudiced may be gained from a minute by Winston Churchill of August 8, 1914. Referring to the refunding of the sums already paid by Turkey, Churchill wrote: "The Turks should have back what they have paid - no more. And there is no hurry about this. They might join the Germans, in which case we shall save our money. Negotiate and temporise." See Andrews, *Intelligence and International Relations*, 84.

<sup>42</sup> Nicolson's quotes have already indicated that such fears were existing at the time of the Tripolitanian war. An official communication, which probably greatly helped to set in motion what was later to become the campaign in Mesopotamia was that of Mr. Bullard, consul at Basrah: "Emissaries may be going from here trying to stir up troubles in India. Turks, in fact all Moslems, very anti-English." See Andrews, *Intelligence and International Relations*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> Andrews, *Intelligence and International Relations*, 86.

the Ottomans were almost powerless in the area, which was in reality administered by "unwritten laws, unrecorded provisions of Government, habits of command and obedience inherited from a remote past and applicable to an immediate present, which was not so very dissimilar from the past. It was founded, not on the power and efficiency of vali and Commandant, but on the authority of village headman, tribal sheikh and local sayyid."<sup>44</sup> Consequently life in the region would be "little disturbed" if the Ottoman authorities should disappear or be replaced with a new conqueror. In other words: Arab resistance to a British conquest of the areas in question was not to be expected; such a conquest would also be easily achieved, as "the sultan's writ falls powerless ten hours' journey west of Baghdad and possibly after a still less prolonged march to the south of the capital of Iraq, while it was palpably a subject for ridicule two hours south-east of Damascus."<sup>45</sup> The gist of the report was that the Arab provinces were there for the taking, with the sole prerequisite that Ottoman rule had to be terminated first. Thus it comes as no surprise that the fostering of Arab independence was adopted as the tool with which to break up the Ottoman Empire. The common British conviction that the Ottoman Empire had been totally taken over by the Germans and that the Young Turks were not sincere Ottoman patriots but a group of pro-German puppets lent further credibility to this decision.<sup>46</sup>

The most important shortcoming of British intelligence in the Middle East was that its collection was the responsibility of a small group of biased individuals. They were not only anti-Ottoman - after all, the Ottoman Empire had joined the enemy camp - but they also underrated the strength of Ottoman internal cohesion. Analysis of available information was carried out in an equally prejudiced manner. At a rather early date the British were convinced that the Ottoman Empire, or more precisely the Young Turkish government, was a German puppet; they were equally convinced that the ethnic and religious minorities were only waiting to be delivered from the "terrible Turk." The British assumed that the peoples of the Middle East were more than willing to exchange Ottoman with British imperial control, ignoring their desire for independence. On the other hand, the British rather short-sightedly backed the dynastic ambitions of one none-too-popular Arab leader who failed to attract the support of most of the Ottoman Arab population. For the British their prejudices turned out to be costly. Christopher Andrew's argument that the Ottoman

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<sup>44</sup> Bell, Gertrude: *The Arab War*. Confidential Information for General Headquarters from Gertrude Bell, being despatches reprinted from the Arab Bulletin. London 1940, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Bell, *The Arab War*, 12. Ms. Bell's rather high-handed approach is difficult to explain after a rather embarrassing defeat suffered at Kut al-Amara in May of the same year. The only explanation might be found in the fact that the British authorities were rather desperate with regard to the war in the Middle East and more than prepared to cling to any straw which might help to achieve the deeply needed successes.

<sup>46</sup> Andrews, *Intelligence and International Relations*, 89.

Empire would have remained neutral if Britain had been willing to take Turkish concerns more seriously is difficult to verify.<sup>47</sup> Britain was not able to act as independently as it desired. It had to take into account the interests of France and Russia in the region, which made it impossible for the British to give the territorial guarantees the Ottomans demanded. Yet even if war in the Middle East was unavoidable, British political and military confusion and disorganisation, largely produced through inability to procure accurate information or an unwillingness to act on it, made the war in that theatre far more lengthy and costly than it would have had to be.

### Reasons for Failure-The British

As has already been mentioned, the contribution of native agents to the British war effort in the Middle East was negligible, but this did by no means only apply to agents working for Britain.

It is not necessary in this study to deal extensively with the Arab revolt as such, which has been covered in numerous publications. Considering the initial objectives the Arab revolt has to be interpreted as a failure, which the British might well have anticipated if better intelligence sources had been available, or if British decision-makers had been prepared to sceptical opinions about the profitability of Husayn's revolt. Arab notables in the Ottoman Empire paid little heed to the revolt, and the Ottoman government had no compunctions to make light of the rebellion in its attempts to calm down the Germans, who saw it as definite proof for the failure of the Ottoman war effort in general and propaganda effort in particular.<sup>48</sup> Cemal Paşa called together a meeting of leading 'ulama in Damascus and asked them to condemn Husayn's revolt in a *fatwa*. They complied without hesitation.<sup>49</sup> The British also were mistaken about the appeal of Arab independence. The attempted use of Arab POWs for the Sharifian army was an embarrassing failure. Of an entire shipload of Arab prisoners, who had been brought into the Hijaz from India and were offered their liberty if they assented to fight for the Sharifian troops, four volunteered, the remainder deciding to wait for the end of the war in Indian POW camps.<sup>50</sup>

The best and most biting accurate statement about the fundamental flaws in the British policies which led to the support of the revolt of Sharif Husayn is that of Ronald Storrs:

<sup>47</sup> Andrews, *Intelligence and International Relations*, 99.

<sup>48</sup> FA/MA, File RM5/2321, Enver to Humann, 12.07.16.

<sup>49</sup> Kayali, Hasan: *Arabs and Young Turks: Turkish-Arab Relations in the Second Constitutional Period*. PhD. thesis, Harvard 1988, 274.

<sup>50</sup> Tauber, Eliezer: *The Arab Movements in the First World War*. London 1993, 165.

"It was at the time and still is my opinion that the Sharif opened his mouth and the British Government their purse a good deal too wide. It seemed to me that having been little more than a sort of administrator for the Turks, the Sharif and his people would be well treated and amply rewarded if they were gratuitously enabled to defeat and evict their traditional enemy, and were guaranteed immunity from external aggression in their permanent possession of the two Holy Cities, together with the independent sovereignty of their country of origin, the Hejaz. If to this a sufficient majority of Moslems chose to add the Khilafat, that was their business and not ours; though, as uniting the strongest religious with the weakest material power, it would be greatly to our interest. But Husayn, who had indeed through Faisal been in touch with the Syrian revolutionaries, claimed to wield a general mandate as King of the Arabs for a spiritual Pan-Araby, to which he knew better than we that he could lay no genuine claim. Of the great Arab peoples of North Africa some must repudiate his Sunni claims to the caliphate: others, like Egypt and the Sudan, vastly preferred their own superior civilisation. The Christians of the Lebanon could never acknowledge him, Mesopotamia was mainly Shi'a, regarding his Islam about as benevolently as Alva did the Protestantism of the Low Countries; to the south the Imam Yahya recognised him as nothing at all, whilst with Ibn Saud on his immediate east (feeling for him as an Ebenezer Chapel might for Rome) he had long been on the terms which were to lead to his final ruin and exile. There was in a word not even as much prospect of Arab Union then as there is now. When in addition we reflect that 90 per cent of the Moslem World must call Husayn a renegade and traitor to the Vicar of God we could not conceal from ourselves (and with difficulty from him) that his pretensions bordered upon the tragicomic. Nevertheless, this partial sacrifice of his name before Islam, vital to our cause though also greatly to his interest, imposed upon us the real obligation of raising and maintaining his prestige to the limit of the possible, so that for this and other reasons we were in the end committed far more deeply in bullion, in munitions of war, and in promises very hard to fulfil, than most of us had dreamed of in September 1914."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Storrs, Ronald: *Orientations*. London 1945, 152 – 153.

**Appendix I:**

**List of individuals involved with Espionage, based on files from the Federal Archive/Military Archive, Freiburg im Breisgau**

**Name of Suspect:                      Date              File              Remarks:**

**I. Suspected of Espionage for Britain:**

1. Petros	28.06.15	RM40/V.732	
2. Marchetos	28.06.15	RM40/V.732	Istanbul
3. Dear	02.07.15	RM40/V.732	Sufli, railway official
4. Mr. Wittal	12.06.17	RM40/V.678	
5. Enver Bey	12.06.17	RM40/V.678	Enver Bey (former captain of the Göben) and Mr. Wittal work against Germany together with the Khedive.
6. Spanish representative in Constanza	13.09.15	RM40/V.733	regularly informs British consul.
7. Constantin Marigo	23.09.15	RM40/V.733	
8. Eugenides	23.09.15	RM40/V.733	
9. Deliangeli	23.09.15	RM40/V.733	
10. Spirithakis	23.09.15	RM40/V.733	
11. Joannis Pithakis	23.09.15	RM40/V.733	
12. Socrates Jambos	23.09.15	RM40/V.733	are expected to arrive in Istanbul from Athens.
13. Sadikoglu Ibrahim	29.09.15	RM40/V.733	
14. Dimitropoulos	29.09.15	RM40/V.733	
15. Jani Metodonakis	17.10.15	RM40/V.733	captain in Ottoman army
16. Sacharoff	17.10.15	RM40/V.733	Russian
17. Prostitutes and Hostel Owners	30.06.16	RM40/V.734	sell their goods cheaply and try to pick the customers' knowledge
18. Atkinson and son	12.10.16	RM40/V.410	Spies, arrested and tried in Smyrna
19. Salih Pasah	12.10.16	RM40/V.410	friend of Grand Vizier
20. Muhtak Bey	12.10.16	RM40/V.410	Secretary of the Ottoman Senate
21. Muharram Bey	12.10.16	RM40/V.410	
22. Abbé Dahime	12.10.16	RM40/V.410	French subject
23. Cadi Paşa	12.10.16	RM40/V.410	British subject
24. Commendatore Volpi	30.07.15	RM40/V.457	wishes to negotiate separate peace with the British.
25. Dr. Djamaoulis	05.04.16	RM40/V.656	
28. Levon Benkian	05.04.16	RM40/V.656	
29. S. Sarkisian	05.04.16	RM40/V.656	

30. Alsacian "femmes artistes" 23.11.15 RM40/V.656 used by British bureaux at Salonica.
31. Jean Travlos 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
32. Temistocles Travlos 01.03.16 RM40/V.655 son of 31
33. Sibiria Spiridis 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
34. Husayn Avci 22.01.16 RM40/V.655 suspected, not confirmed
35. Haimadopoulos 08.01.16 RM40/V.655
36. Georginidis Christidis 08.01.16 RM40/V.655
37. Vasili Lakis 08.01.16 RM40/V.655
38. Shukri Bey 08.01.16 RM40/V.655 possibly plan attack on railway
39. Evangelos Papadopoulos 10.02.16 RM40/V.655
40. Konstantin Kalionis 28.02.16 RM40/V.655 succeeded Stilianidis
41. Mahmut Fakhri Efendi 03.03.16 RM40/V.655
42. Stephan Papadopoulos 03.03.16 RM40/V.655
43. Jean Peretti 03.03.16 RM40/V.655
44. Henri Hosanghian 03.03.16 RM40/V.655
45. Hakki Ismail Bey 28.03.16 RM40/V.655

## **II. Suspected of Espionage for France:**

1. Menelas Vlastos 29.09.15 RM40/V.733 Ottoman soldier
2. Migirdic Tavitian 05.04.16 RM40/V.656
3. "Sales" 01.03.16 RM40/V.655 with description
4. Skaraontzo 29.11.15 RM40/V.655 Greek naval officer, Athens
5. Fontenailles 03.04.16 RM40/V.655
6. Morin 1917 RM40/V.228. French captain, director of intelligence service on Thasos island
7. Charilaos farmer from Enos
8. Dimitzko Bulgar from Dedeagatch
9. Georgi Morin's servant, from Xanti
10. Georgios Georgiadis from Constantinople
11. Christodoulos Gonulas from Enos
12. Anastasios Kirlangitis from Bursa
13. Panagiotidis from Constantinople; 7 - 13 are Morin's agents

## **III. Suspected of Espionage for Russia:**

1. Ernst Gras 16.08.16 RM40/V.678 dancing teacher and pimp, Garden Bar, Istanbul; wrongly suspected



2. Dr. Andreas Mandelstam and  
7 Russians disguised as Hocas 04.11.14 RM40/V.4 Mandelstam is dragoman in Russian embassy; Russians have been arrested as spies; Armenian church dignitaries have also been won for espionage
3. Abraham Mordekhai 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
4. M.O. Wechsler 29.02.16 RM40/V.656 suspected to belong to spy ring of colonel Sengoroff; acquitted 9.03.16
5. Mme. Debiye 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
6. Georgi Nidolov 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
7. Paykurik 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
8. Francois Krah1 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
9. Jean Bazian 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
10. Cormac Tenor 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
11. Siparit Mazarianz 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
12. Haruntenian 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
13. Joseph Filipstein 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
14. Ilie Kurz 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
15. Troianofski 25.02.16 RM40/V.656
16. Perides Mehri 29.01.16 RM40/V.656 escapes, arrives in Egypt 12.03.16.
17. Heraut Noraudhingian 29.06.16 RM40/V.656
18. Henri de Genonville 04.07.16 RM40/V.656 also in contact with French director of espionage at Bucarest, Jules Ansaldi.
19. Kaminski 29.01.16 RM40/V.655
20. Makri 29.01.16 RM40/V.655
21. Abdul Gavor Mustapha 29.01.16 RM40/V.655:19 director of Russian espionage, in Rumania, 20-21 directors in Constantinople.
22. Hasan Burhaneddin 01.03.16 RM40/V.655 former Ottoman police officer
23. Ekaterina Piralino 08.12.15 RM40/V.655 suspicion not confirmed
24. Ersilia Marcella 11.12.15 RM40/V.655 Rumanian subject
25. Jeanette Solomonovic 29.12.15 RM40/V.655
26. Josef Michel Privilegio 16.02.16 RM40/V.655 suspicion confirmed, Haas (German counterintelligence officer) doubtful
27. Tromasian 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
28. Cernak 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
29. Nazarianz 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
30. Kartomiscu 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
31. Sisman 01.03.16 RM40/V.655

32. Hagopian	01.03.16 RM40/V.655
33. Gruken	01.03.16 RM40/V.655
34. Mustafa Haci Aga	01.03.16 RM40/V.655
35. Tsatsopoulos	01.03.16 RM40/V.655
36. Georgios Zamias	01.03.16 RM40/V.655
37. Epaminonda Patasov	27.02.16 RM40/V.655
38. Fardi	19.03.16 RM40/V.655
39. Rendi	19.03.16 RM40/V.655
40. Terpandro	19.03.16 RM40/V.655
41. Stanescu	19.03.16 RM40/V.655
42. Toma Madoupo Mosal	25.03.16 RM40/V.655
43. Karlijas	25.03.16 RM40/V.655
44. Madopoulos	25.03.16 RM40/V.655
45. Enise	25.03.16 RM40/V.655
46. Nicolov	25.03.16 RM40/V.655
47. Hugo Bacher	25.03.16 RM40/V.655
48. Friedrich Rosenstreich	25.03.16 RM40/V.655
49. Axel Ashkenaze	25.03.16 RM40/V.655
50. Logiadis	01.04.16 RM40/V.655
51. Terpandros	01.04.16 RM40/V.655

#### **IV. Suspected of Espionage for Japan:**

Japanese businessmen	12.11.14 RM40/V.4 Sureté has raided headquarters of in Constantinople Japanese espionage ring, masked as trading enterprise.
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#### **V. German Agents:**

1. Ino Ezratly	31.07.15 RM40/V.732
2. Max Bernstein	10.12.15 RM40/V.734
3. H.E.Heitmann	13.12.15 RM40/V.734 from Deutsche Levante-Linie, Humann proposes his use for intelligence.
4. Caderawali	12.11.14 RM40/V.457 Indian Brahmin
5. Ali ibn Hasan	12.11.14 RM40/V.457 Relative of Shaykh Muhammad Abdullah Hasan ('Mad Mullah'), to go to Somalia
6. "Luckner"	01.03.16 RM40/V.655
7. Ms. Solomonovic	01.03.16 RM40/V.655
8. Dimitrios Nicolaides	09.12.15 RM40/V.655

#### **VI. Suspected of Espionage for the USA:**

1. William Hardy	01.02.17 RM40/V.734
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**VII. Ottoman Agents:**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1. Refid Bey | 22.11.14 RM40/V.457 Liaison agent for Ottoman Secret Service |
|--------------|--|

**VIII. Suspected of Espionage for Serbia:**

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Pandelis Zamaoulis | 05.04.16 RM40/V.656 |
| 2. Methodia Orsevic   | 05.04.16 RM40/V.656 |

**IX. Suspects of Unspecified Adherence:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Michelson  | 17.12.16 RM40/V.678   |
| 2. Karl Vincentovic                                     | 17.12.16 RM40/V.678   |
| 3. R. Schmid  | 17.12.16 RM40/V.678   |
| 4. Brandel brothers                                     | 17.12.16 RM40/V.678 sent messages on the inside of newspaper bandages; Göben = Qualität B, Breslau = Qualität C |
| 5. Antionia Dimitris                                    | 04.05.17 RM40/V.678   |
| 6. Kosta Basilikou                                      | 04.05.17 RM40/V.678   |
| 7. Nadas Georgios                                       | 04.05.17 RM40/V.678 are to be arrested on arrival in Istanbul   |
| 8. Greek Embassy is Spy Center for the Entente          | 31.10.14 RM40/V.4   |
| 9. Sami Solomon   | 26.06.15 RM40/V.732   |
| 10. Louis Freund  | 26.06.15 RM40/V.732   |
| 11. Said Bey Mullaheddin ("ancien regime"- sympathiser) | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733   |
| 12. Hoca Ahmet Hamdeddin                                | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733   |
| 13. Husayn Kadri Bey (former Ottoman deputy)            | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733 prepare terrorist attack in Constanza   |
| 14. Dr. Timo  | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733   |
| 15. Mecidie   | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733   |
| 16. Riza Efendi   | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733 Turkish teacher from Egypt  |
| 17. Rashid Ridvan                                       | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733 owner of a coffee shop  |
| 18. Alexiadis   | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733 prostitute from Istanbul  |
| 19. Olga Fanjella                                       | 21.08.15 RM40/V.733 prostitute, Serbian nationality   |
| 20. Dimitrios Agapios                                   | 04.10.15 RM40/V.733 Smyrna  |
| 21. Raphael Sidisspies                                  | 04.10.15 RM40/V.733   |
| 20. Agop  | 04.10.15 RM40/V.733 Belgian, director of tramway  |
| 21. Jean Minardos                                       | 04.10.15 RM40/V.733 transports letters to Greece by boat.   |

22. Dr. Harold Nolan 25.10.15 RM30/V.733 former chief of Egyptian secret police, has contacts with Turkish princesses
23. Nisak Efendi 04.10.16 RM40/V.410 Armenian, suspected and convicted of espionage
24. Kirjahides 12.10.16 RM40/V.410 Greek lawyer in Smyrna
25. Kirjahides' brother 12.10.16 RM40/V.410
26. Female Relative of K. 12.10.16 RM40/V.410 24-26 arrested in Smyrna
27. Manol Mikola 12.10.16 RM40/V.410 arrested in Haydar Paşa.
28. Vesil Petrali 12.10.16 RM40/V.410 arrested in Rodosto.
29. Mossate 12.10.16 RM40/V.410 French railway inspector in Smyrna
30. Count Nani 15.12.14 RM40/V.457 Member of Italian Embassy
31. Lieutenant Sturm 05.04.16 RM40/V.656 in Sofia
32. Lieutenant Vollmer 05.04.16 RM40/V.656 in Sofia
33. Sharki Bonciaghian 04.05.16 RM40/V.656 lived in Glasgow
34. Nishan Kidikian 04.05.16 RM40/V.656 from Kishinev
35. Nishan Gregorian 04.05.16 RM40/V.656 Kars; 33-35 Dashnaks or Hinjaks.
36. Jean Fridas 06.03.16 RM40/V.656 Dragoman of Greek Embassy
37. Halinor Marchesi 06.03.16 RM40/V.656 Agent of "Service Maritime Italien"
38. Misirli Boghos 06.03.16 RM40/V.656
39. Count Triangi 06.03.16 RM40/V.656 Brother-in-law of 38
40. Italian Naval officer and 20 other Italians 06.03.16 RM40/V.656 36-40 espionage ring; all have been arrested.
41. Vera Michailovna Stayan 06.03.16 RM40/V.656
42. Elia Brashov 06.03.16 RM40/V.656
43. Lubomir Teodorov 06.03.16 RM40/V.656
44. Dragomanova 06.03.16 RM40/V.656 41-44 suspected of espionage.
45. Cornelius Brink 09.03.16 RM40/V.656
46. Ishak Efendi 09.03.16 RM40/V.656
47. Jacques Arditi 06.03.16 RM40/V.656
48. Perides 06.03.16 RM40/V.656
49. Osman Efendi 08.03.16 RM40/V.656 in Üsküb
50. Nejib Bey 08.03.16 RM40/V.656 in Monastir
51. Tahi Slatano 08.03.16 RM40/V.656 in Serres

52. Blond 08.03.16 RM40/V.656 Swedish, ex-spy of Abdülhamid II.
53. Süreya Bey 08.03.16 RM40/V.656 Spagnolian
54. Anastas Anastanides 08.03.16 RM40/V.656
55. Sarkis 08.03.16 RM40/V.656 49-55 Entente spies in Salonica
56. Prince Gagarin Urazov 04.03.16 RM40/V.656
57. Mikhail Yenesin 04.03.16 RM40/V.656
58. Beigel 04.03.16 RM40/V.656 Yenesin's girl-friend
59. Vasile Saja 04.03.16 RM40/V.656
60. Ama Gheoff 04.03.16 RM40/V.656
61. Boris Troianofski 04.03.16 RM40/V.656
62. Aimée Nevtonova 04.03.16 RM40/V.656
63. Philip Smilovici 04.03.16 RM40/V.656
64. Nazim Paşa 02.02.16 RM40/V.655
65. Ismail Hakki Bey 02.02.16 RM40/V.655
66. Shaykh Omar 02.02.16 RM40/V.655
67. Sayyid Hoca 02.02.16 RM40/V.655
68. Mustafa Anica Hoca 02.02.16 RM40/V.655 64-68 Turks from Salonica, have created a pro-Entente spy ring
69. Azarian Efendi 26.06.16 RM40/V.656 Senator, works against the CUP
70. Gregorian patriarch and former patriarch in Istanbul 04.07.16 RM40/V.656 have set up a conspiracy
71. Gabay family 04.07.16 RM40/V.656 Constantinople, under suspicion
72. Sabah Galian 04.07.16 RM40/V.656
73. M. Tekpourian 04.07.16 RM40/V.656
74. Hoven Avadissian 04.07.16 RM40/V.656 leaders of Hinjaks in Rumania
75. Stanak Polychronis 31.08.16 RM40/V.656
76. Simon Belmoines 31.08.16 RM40/V.656 distributed questionnaires among soldiers.
77. Lodyger 13.11.16 RM40/V.656 was ordered to destroy "Göben" in Holland.
78. Jews with Austrian passports, Greeks 25.12.15 RM40/V.655 mainly used by Entente espionage.
79. Yovani Pitakis 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
80. Elias Gabay 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
81. Yanni Milodonaki 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
82. Sacharov 01.03.16 RM40/V.655
83. Anette Michalison 01.03.16 RM40/V.655 suspected, but innocent

84. Catina Varucha	01.03.16 RM40/V.655
85. Alexandre Varucha	01.03.16 RM40/V.655 husband of 84
86. Panagios Vegenides	29.11.15 RM40/V.655 accused of having written letters with invisible ink
87. Pangiotis Evgenides	10.01.16 RM40/V.655
88. Nicola Karmanoglu	10.01.16 RM40/V.655
89. Jean Stilianides	10.01.16 RM40/V.655 87-89 dealers in flour and timber, suspected
90. Slovos Kapazoff	28.02.16 RM40/V.655 shot in Philipopolis
91. "Christos"	28.02.16 RM40/V.655 arrested in Sofia
92. Dimitrios Agapios	30.11.15 RM40/V.655 suspected, but not confirmed
93. Mlle. Angelis	02.12.15 RM40/V.655 arrested in Bucarest; has been transporting letters from "vieux turcs et arméniens."
94. Madame Galinos	09.12.15 RM40/V.655 Entente spy; her house is centre of espionage (close to Tünel square)
95. Konstantin Maropoulos	09.12.15 RM40/V.655 station director, Haydar Paşa
96. Georgopoulos	09.12.15 RM40/V.655 engineer
97. Vasil Eugenis	30.12.15 RM40/V.655 father of 98
98. Marco Eugenis	30.12.15 RM40/V.655 97-98 were double-agents, in Pera, yet have disappeared.
99. Hector Nicolaides	22.01.16 RM40/V.655
100. Askeriades	22.01.16 RM40/V.655 99-100 are American passport holders; belong to Stilianides's group.
101. Jean Ekintzis	22.01.16 RM40/V.655
102. Nicholas Monrikis	02.02.16 RM40/V.655
103. Spiro Poulos	15.11.15 RM40/V.655
104. Mathos	15.11.15 RM40/V.655 101-104 have been arrested in Sofia.
105. Antoine Basmarian	15.11.15 RM40/V.655
106. Athanassiades	15.11.15 RM40/V.655
107. Kerman Adjnan	15.11.15 RM40/V.655
108. Libareté	15.11.15 RM40/V.655
109. Arjumian	15.11.15 RM40/V.655 105-109 are suspected, but still at large in Bucarest.
110. Faik Bey Conitza	15.02.16 RM40/V.655
111. Horanas Hagopian	18.02.16 RM40/V.655 meets in Sofia with Matosian, Einstein (American) and Manatchev.
112. Ms. Sulayman	21.02.16 RM40/V.655

113. Ms. Seeger 21.02.16 RM40/V.655 112-113 are teachers in Arnautköy girls' school, suspected of contacts with the British and Americans
114. Konstantin Mitropoulos 15.02.16 RM40/V.655
115. Nicholas Arapoglu 15.02.16 RM40/V.655 114-15 both in Sofia
116. Jean Misiroglu 26.02.16 RM40/V.655
117. Georgios Saikaris 26.02.16 RM40/V.655 116-17 are planning to blow up bridge in Eregli
118. Simon 27.02.16 RM40/V.655
119. Stürmer 27.02.16 RM40/V.655 118-19 are correspondents for "The Times."
120. Alex Cherasimo 27.02.16 RM40/V.655
121. Boris Georgiev 27.02.16 RM40/V.655
122. Lazar Androvitch 27.02.16 RM40/V.655
123. Constinas Kaltakis 27.02.16 RM40/V.655 120-123 in Bucarest
124. Charles Theodor Schmidt 16.03.16 RM40/V.655
125. Sami Hochberg 06.03.16 RM40/V.655
126. Podlachuk 06.03.16 RM40/V.655
127. Rabinovici 06.03.16 RM40/V.655 124-127 in Bucarest
128. Sali Simon 18.03.16 RM40/V.655
129. Jean Fridas 22.03.16 RM40/V.655 dragoman of Greek Embassy
130. Marchesi 22.03.16 RM40/V.655
131. Misirli Boghos 22.03.16 RM40/V.655 129-131 have been convicted of membership in an espionage network.
132. Jacques Sussein 22.03.16 RM40/V.655
133. "Two terrorists" 24.03.16 RM40/V.655 were arrested, had mission to assassinate Enver and Talaat
134. Mustafa Natic Paşa 02.04.16 RM40/V.655
135. Mehmet Aris 02.04.16 RM40/V.655
136. Shaykh Taksim 02.04.16 RM40/V.655
137. Akil Bey 02.04.16 RM40/V.655
138. Mehmet Tevfik Bey 02.04.16 RM40/V.655 134-138 had correspondence with a British general.
139. Ms. Hellberg 06.04.16 RM40/V.655 Swedish citizen
140. Dr. Singa no date; Spanish doctor, now in Geneva
141. Dr. Oskar Staffler no date; born in Trieste, now in Pera
142. Dr. Peter Bucher no date; Alsatian, now French army doctor, director of French intelligence office in Rechesy

**Of 263 agents or suspected individuals mentioned by name:**

<b>Greeks:</b>	<b>86 = 32,70%</b>
<b>Unspecified:</b>	<b>59 = 22,43%</b>
<b>Muslims:</b>	<b>40 = 15,21%</b>
<b>Armenians:</b>	<b>22 = 8,37%</b>
<b>Russians:</b>	<b>14 = 5,32%</b>
<b>Bulgarians:</b>	<b>9 = 3,42%</b>
<b>Italians:</b>	<b>9 = 3,42%</b>
<b>French:</b>	<b>9 = 3,42%</b>
<b>British:</b>	<b>6 = 2,28%</b>
<b>Rumanians:</b>	<b>4 = 1,52%</b>
<b>Spaniards:</b>	<b>2 = 0,76%</b>
<b>Swedish:</b>	<b>2 = 0,76%</b>
<b>Americans:</b>	<b>1 = 0,38%</b>

<b>Sum total:</b>	<b>263    100%</b>
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## Geographical and Personal Index:

Aaron Aaronsohn 122, 123, 124, 126, 127, 282  
Abbas Hilmi 58, 80, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 141, 146, 154, 192  
'Abd al-' Aziz ibn-Sa' ud 58  
'Abd al-Malik Hamea Efendi 150  
'Abd al-Qadir 39, 40, 42, 87, 137  
'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi 58  
'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar 159  
'Abdallahi 41  
Abdülhamid II 13, 20, 25, 40, 47, 56, 57, 62, 71, 81, 88, 97, 249, 257  
Absalom Feinberg 124  
Abu-l-Kalam 220  
Abyssinia 152, 178, 180, 203, 206, 207, 209, 212  
Acre 148  
Addis Abbaba 207  
Aden 72, 83  
Adib Ishaq 225  
Adli Paşa Yeghen 81

Afghanistan 12, 39, 67, 82, 83, 92, 98, 134, 146, 152, 167, 171, 175, 178, 227, 257, 267, 276, 279, 281  
Africa 5, 14, 29, 38, 39, 40, 44, 49, 51, 63, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 98, 119, 133, 134, 152, 183, 190, 199, 203, 206, 207, 208, 221, 226, 241, 263, 274, 276  
Agence Ottomane 60, 61, 95, 176  
Agents v, 1, 10, 18, 20, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 78, 79, 82, 84, 91, 94, 95, 96, 103, 104, 106, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 118, 119, 121, 122, 124, 125, 127, 128, 129, 130, 134, 142, 149, 150, 171, 172, 173, 174, 177, 179, 181, 183, 185, 186, 189, 196, 199, 205, 207, 215, 230, 231, 232, 240, 244, 251, 252  
Ahmad al-Sharif 40, 87, 97, 150, 184, 231  
Ahmed Shafiq Paşa 154  
Ahmet Izzet Paşa 54, 266  
Aintab 147  
Al-Aqsa 146  
Al-Arish 101, 106

- Al-Difna'a 188  
 Aleppo 93, 95, 134, 146, 147, 148, 165, 210, 274  
 Alexander Aaronsohn 127  
 Al-Fasher 229  
 Algeria 37, 38, 40, 87, 183, 184, 186, 187, 188, 194, 197, 221, 256  
 Al-Hafa 211  
 'Ali Bash Hamba 87  
 'Ali Dinar 195, 204, 207, 228, 231  
 Ali Fethi Bey (Okyar) 87  
 Ali Ihsan Sabis Papa 54  
 'Ali Shamsi Bey 117  
 Al-Ittihad Al-Uthmani 147  
 Al-Jihad 140  
 Allenby 7, 127, 261, 269, 286  
 Al-Mufid 147, 148  
 Al-Nakhl 100, 101  
 Alois Muail 67, 84, 223  
 al-Qibla 159, 160  
 Al-Ra'y Al-'Am 147, 148  
 Al-Riyadh 149  
 Al-Salum 60, 187, 195, 231  
 Al-Salum 120, 121  
 Al-Ula 211, 212  
 Al-Wadj 211, 212  
 Al-Zuhur 149  
 Amir 'Ali 126  
 'Amir 'Ali 87  
 Anatolia 48, 162, 165, 170, 274  
 Aqaba 81, 101, 173  
 Arab Bureau 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 159, 236, 258, 283  
 Arab nationalism v. 1, 76, 126, 165, 172  
 Arab revolt 11, 12, 159, 170, 213, 240  
 Arabia 19, 67, 68, 72, 76, 84, 87, 90, 149, 150, 155, 156, 167, 173, 175, 181, 197, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 212, 218, 221, 222, 234, 237, 239, 271, 272, 273, 280, 283  
 Arabian Peninsula 74, 78, 92, 155, 159, 233  
 Armenian massacres 91, 123  
 Armenians 68, 162, 165, 235, 252, 255, 258, 261, 262, 272, 278, 281  
 'Asadullah Khan Hidayah 138  
 Asia Minor 68, 69, 79, 123, 151, 193, 194, 263, 280  
 'Asir 167, 211, 223, 233  
 Aslut 114  
 Aswan 114  
 Athens 69, 108, 111, 113, 118, 121, 188, 189, 243, 244  
 Athlit 122, 124, 125, 128  
 Australia 7, 35, 98, 262, 281  
 Austria 3, 4, 7, 23, 35, 44, 47, 49, 50, 60, 80, 82, 99, 101, 126, 146, 153, 180, 190, 191, 218, 255, 260, 283  
 Azerbaijan 149, 223  
 'Aziz 'Ali 73, 74, 87, 116, 161  
 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri 73, 74, 87, 116, 161  
 Back Papa 110, 150, 213, 228  
 Baghdad 7, 26, 31, 35, 48, 72, 74, 146, 149, 168, 170, 228, 239, 264, 266, 269, 271, 277  
 Baghdad Railway 26, 31, 264, 269  
 Bahaettin Shakir 87  
 Balfour Declaration 36  
 Balkan war 4, 86, 97  
 Bash Hamba 228  
 Basrah 92, 173, 232, 238, 266  
 Bedri Bey 70  
 Beirut 7, 8, 76, 95, 111, 124, 144, 147, 148, 151, 165, 176, 256, 259, 268, 284  
 Belgium 34, 37, 151, 162  
 Bell 7, 73, 239, 259, 266  
 Bethmann-Hollweg 53, 84, 109, 110, 210, 213, 260  
 Bir Sab'a 99, 100, 101, 124, 164  
 Biharin 114  
 Black Sea 53, 54, 82  
 Borchardt 185  
 Bosnia-Herzegovina 23, 60, 160  
 Brnach 110  
 Bray 73, 260  
 Breslau 52, 247, 283  
 Britain v. vii, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 22, 24, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 96, 98, 117, 128, 130, 133, 134, 143, 146, 147, 148, 164, 169, 174, 176, 183, 185, 190, 201, 220, 226, 233, 236, 237, 238, 240, 243, 257, 261, 265, 267, 275, 276, 283  
 British Empire 22, 98, 220, 237  
 Brode 147  
 Bronsart von Schellendorff 82, 83, 132, 221  
 Bulgaria 7, 11, 23, 35, 51, 125, 153, 179, 260  
 Bushir al-Liwa 177  
 C.H. Becker 59, 133  
 Cairo 40, 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 100, 109, 115, 125, 148, 150, 159, 180, 236, 277  
 caliph v. 38, 43, 51, 56, 57, 58, 60, 76, 77, 99, 132, 133, 146, 166, 174, 187, 190, 197, 202, 222  
 Caucasus 11, 37, 42, 51, 55, 83, 84, 85, 92, 133, 149, 178, 192, 217, 221  
 Cavid Bey 46, 74, 90  
 Celal Bey 148  
 Cemal Bey 100  
 Cemal Papa 46, 51, 56, 57, 85, 87, 99, 100, 101, 102, 123, 124, 125, 128, 148, 154, 156, 158, 161, 163, 164, 169, 179, 197, 200, 201, 204, 206, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 225, 235, 241, 256, 258  
 Central Asia 38, 49, 51, 88, 143, 175, 258  
 Central Powers 6, 16, 33, 34, 51, 53, 67, 85, 104, 116, 131, 146, 164, 165, 168, 183, 184, 202, 217, 218, 237  
 Çerkes Tahir 89  
 Cesarea 127  
 Cetes 86, 89, 110  
 Chania 188  
 Chattopadhyaya 138  
 Churchill 64, 145, 238  
 Cihad-i Ekber 86  
 Cilicia 68

- Clausewitz 4, 20, 33, 273  
 Colonel Redl 9, 10  
 Colonial Empires 22  
 Colonial Powers v, 1, 13, 29, 39, 40, 42, 62, 94, 96, 220  
 Constantinople 15, 19, 34, 60, 82, 84, 104, 109, 110, 113, 129, 155, 169, 178, 188, 193, 194, 199, 204, 210, 228, 244, 245, 250, 255, 263, 264, 269  
 Crete 121, 160, 187  
 CUP 7, 23, 24, 46, 47, 50, 55, 56, 57, 72, 75, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 97, 113, 142, 144, 145, 147, 149, 154, 156, 160, 165, 166, 168, 169, 172, 174, 192, 193, 215, 224, 234, 235, 249  
 Damascus 28, 48, 54, 73, 92, 96, 100, 101, 111, 115, 128, 144, 146, 147, 148, 149, 155, 165, 173, 176, 177, 178, 181, 182, 201, 202, 203, 211, 212, 213, 214, 239, 241, 255, 285  
 Dar al-Islam 38, 224  
 Dar al-Salam 43  
 Dardanelles 36, 179, 193, 255, 264, 272, 285  
 Darfur 181, 195, 204, 207, 213, 228, 229, 231  
 Derna 44  
 Dette Publique Ottomane 210  
 Deutsche Bank 45, 210  
 Deutscher Überseedienst 160  
 Diehl 178, 209, 215  
 Dr. Ahmad Vali 137, 140  
 Dr. Hoffmann viii, 94, 95, 96, 144  
 Dr. Micha Paul Simon 101  
 Dr. Padel 177  
 Dr. Ruth Buka 137  
 Dr. Weigelt 109  
 Dr. Saadi 138  
 Druze 28, 170  
 East Indies 173  
 Eastern Strategy 34, 285  
 Egypt viii, 7, 15, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 49, 51, 55, 58, 60, 62, 72, 73, 75, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 92, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 124, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 141, 146, 147, 150, 152, 155, 156, 165, 167, 170, 173, 174, 177, 178, 179, 180, 183, 184, 185, 186, 188, 190, 192, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 202, 217, 220, 222, 224, 225, 226, 228, 230, 232, 241, 245, 248, 254, 263, 272, 274, 285  
 Egyptian nationalists 84, 96, 98, 104, 105, 106, 109, 111, 112, 113, 117, 118, 139, 141, 142, 150, 165, 196, 197, 203  
 EMSIB 127  
 Entente v, 1, 3, 4, 6, 14, 15, 16, 18, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 41, 46, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55, 60, 61, 62, 64, 68, 69, 76, 77, 78, 88, 90, 91, 95, 104, 117, 121, 134, 140, 141, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152, 157, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 171, 172, 174, 175, 176, 179, 184, 188, 193, 217, 222, 224, 226, 228, 230, 231, 247, 249, 250, 276  
 Enver Paşa 11, 26, 43, 44, 54, 56, 60, 66, 80, 82, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 97, 107, 110, 112, 113, 118, 121, 122, 141, 156, 157, 161, 164, 167, 168, 178, 183, 188, 189, 192, 193, 194, 195, 202, 204, 205, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 214, 221, 222, 224, 227, 231, 232, 233, 264, 269, 285  
 Ernst Neuenhofer 138  
 Eşref Kucubası 88, 92, 93, 101, 177, 226, 234, 235  
 espionage vi, 9, 10, 19, 65, 66, 68, 69, 90, 91, 107, 118, 131, 163, 215, 218, 227, 245, 246, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252  
 Eugen Mittwoch 137, 152  
 Fahri Bey 105, 109  
 Faik Paşa 115  
 Faissal 8, 154, 241  
 Falkenhayn 83, 84, 160, 161, 201, 206, 207, 265  
 Faraj ibn al-Maari 89  
 Farhat Bey al-Zawi 45, 97  
 Fatah Al-'Arab 147  
 Faysal 19, 154, 156, 157, 158, 181  
 Ferdinand Grütisch 138  
 Filastin 147  
 First World War v, vi, vii, viii, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 32, 33, 43, 45, 56, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 70, 71, 86, 128, 144, 171, 172, 197, 217, 234, 235, 236, 241, 256, 257, 258, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 273, 275, 276, 278, 280, 281, 282  
 Flotow 99, 111, 112, 116, 118, 120, 183, 192, 198  
 Foreign Office xi, 9, 15, 18, 45, 55, 64, 71, 73, 77, 78, 80, 82, 83, 84, 99, 100, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 126, 130, 135, 140, 141, 142, 144, 152, 155, 173, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 191, 192, 193, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 203, 204, 205, 207, 208, 209, 210, 219, 220, 228, 229, 254, 259, 261, 270, 273  
 France 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 22, 24, 29, 30, 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 61, 63, 71, 79, 95, 117, 133, 134, 148, 164, 169, 174, 176, 183, 190, 221, 224, 225, 226, 238, 240, 244, 268, 272, 275, 281  
 Friedrich Klein 67, 171  
 Friedrich Naumann 82  
 Friedrich Perzynski 139  
 Frobenius 84, 180, 182, 213  
 Fu'ad al-Khatib 159  
 Fuad Selim Bey 150  
 Fuat Bey 211, 212  
 Gallipoli 6, 7, 8, 19, 35, 69, 85, 92, 127, 145, 156, 158, 164, 220, 236, 259, 260, 264, 268, 269, 270, 272, 273, 275, 280  
 Garroni 118, 183, 184, 186  
 Gavdos 187  
 Gaza 78, 127  
 Geissler 105, 106, 109, 113, 118, 141  
 Gemsah 101  
 Geneva 105, 106, 109, 111, 113, 118, 139, 141, 228, 252, 256  
 Geo M. Schreiner 67  
 Georg Gondos 101  
 Georg of Bavaria 85

- German East Africa 207  
 German emperor 48, 160, 184  
 German Emperor 92, 135  
 German general staff 10, 52, 84, 99, 118, 130, 182, 202  
 German-British rivalry 28, 31  
 German-Ottoman alliance viii, 6, 20, 45, 95, 107, 162, 172, 199  
 Germans v. viii, ix, 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22, 30, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 43, 45, 48, 50, 51, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 75, 83, 84, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 141, 142, 145, 150, 158, 159, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 176, 177, 180, 181, 182, 183, 185, 186, 187, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 201, 202, 203, 206, 209, 212, 213, 214, 215, 217, 219, 220, 223, 227, 229, 230, 233, 236, 238, 239, 241, 264, 276  
 Germany v. vii, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 59, 60, 62, 63, 66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 92, 93, 97, 98, 99, 101, 112, 116, 123, 125, 128, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 141, 143, 145, 146, 147, 148, 151, 153, 160, 162, 164, 167, 173, 175, 183, 184, 187, 188, 190, 191, 193, 196, 197, 198, 203, 206, 210, 211, 215, 218, 219, 220, 224, 229, 236, 243, 257, 259, 262, 264, 265, 277, 280, 282, 283  
 Göben 52, 243, 247, 250  
 Gondos 101, 102, 150  
 Grand Vizier 53, 54, 74, 86, 87, 90, 105, 117, 131, 141, 243  
 Great Power 22, 26, 48  
 Great Powers 3, 4, 8, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30, 46, 47, 48, 50, 55, 97, 257, 264, 271  
 Great War vii, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 23, 32, 65, 66, 87, 156, 162, 235, 254, 255, 257, 259, 261, 264, 266, 278, 284  
 Greece 51, 69, 79, 120, 122, 188, 195, 248, 257, 280, 281  
 Greeks 68, 69, 79, 123, 152, 160, 165, 250, 252  
 Grey 3, 34, 73, 259, 267, 282  
 Grote 115, 267  
 Gulf 31, 72, 155, 156  
 Gustave E. Boker 187  
 Gustave E. Roeder 121  
 Haifa 123, 148, 254  
 Halid Corum Bey 186  
 Halil 87, 138, 162, 228, 269  
 Hannes Schmidt 119  
 Hans von Wangenheim 49, 94, 153  
 Har Dayal 112, 113, 134, 138  
 Harald Cosack 139  
 Hauran 27, 28  
 Hawran 148, 170  
 Hedayat 228  
 Heinrich Jacoby 139  
 Hellmuth von Moltke 27  
 Helmut von Gienapp 138  
 Herbert Müller 138  
 Hesse 149  
 Hijaz 11, 26, 35, 67, 89, 94, 144, 148, 150, 154, 155, 156, 158, 168, 170, 172, 173, 174, 178, 179, 180, 182, 194, 198, 200, 201, 202, 203, 205, 208, 209, 211, 213, 214, 215, 223, 234, 241, 272, 276  
 hijra 39  
 Hikmet Bey 165  
 Hilmi Musallimi 87, 88  
 Hirtzel 238  
 Hizb al-Watan 75, 141  
 Hoca Abbas 87  
 Hodeida 207, 211  
 Hohenlohe 196  
 Holy War 14, 15, 38, 44, 45, 59, 82, 89, 133, 143, 146, 150, 199, 222, 223, 257, 280  
 Hudayda 181  
 Humann 94, 95, 96, 162, 168, 169, 173, 194, 241, 247  
 Husayn Kamil 146, 194  
 Ibn Rashid 87, 155, 156, 167, 211, 222, 233  
 Ibn Sa'ud 74, 92, 156, 167, 222, 233  
 Idris 121, 167, 194, 211, 233  
 Imam Yahya 175, 233, 242  
 Imperialism 32, 271, 273, 279  
 India 15, 30, 31, 34, 37, 38, 39, 42, 51, 63, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 78, 82, 83, 84, 91, 92, 98, 106, 108, 126, 133, 134, 141, 142, 143, 146, 149, 152, 156, 167, 174, 178, 181, 185, 217, 220, 221, 236, 238, 241, 254, 257, 259, 261, 268, 278  
 India Office 73  
 Indian Independence Committee 138, 141, 142, 179, 208  
 Indonesia 38, 42, 167  
 intelligence v. 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 48, 57, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 78, 79, 80, 84, 85, 86, 88, 93, 94, 95, 96, 104, 111, 112, 116, 119, 121, 122, 124, 127, 129, 130, 131, 137, 140, 142, 149, 150, 172, 191, 195, 208, 214, 221, 230, 235, 236, 237, 240, 244, 247, 252, 283  
 Intelligence Office for the East Siehe IOFE, Siehe IOFE, Siehe IOFE, Siehe IOFE, Siehe IOFE, Siehe IOFE  
 IOFE xi, 88, 133, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 142, 143, 145, 152, 160, 164, 165, 167, 195, 197, 199, 205, 208, 228  
 Iran 12, 74, 92, 94, 96, 143, 185, 217, 222, 223, 227, 228, 260, 263, 277, 281  
 Iraq 12, 31, 35, 73, 74, 75, 92, 160, 171, 178, 223, 226, 232, 239, 264, 269  
 Islam vi, vii, 13, 14, 22, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 48, 49, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 62, 75, 77, 81, 83, 86, 91, 92, 100, 112, 117, 133, 135, 140, 159, 160, 166, 168, 172, 173, 174, 176, 184, 190, 192, 197, 198, 211, 220, 222, 224, 225, 227, 231, 238, 242, 262, 267, 268, 276, 277, 280, 284, 286  
 Islampolitik 38, 47, 54, 55, 284  
 Ismail Canbulat Bey 70, 87

- Isma'il Husni 112  
 Isma'il Kamil Efendi 150  
 Istanbul vi, xi, 6, 7, 11, 19, 40, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 67, 68, 70, 71, 73, 76, 83, 85, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 94, 100, 102, 103, 104, 109, 112, 113, 118, 119, 120, 128, 133, 135, 140, 144, 145, 146, 151, 152, 154, 157, 162, 165, 167, 168, 169, 170, 173, 174, 183, 185, 191, 193, 194, 195, 199, 200, 202, 204, 205, 209, 210, 211, 213, 214, 215, 220, 221, 222, 227, 228, 231, 233, 243, 245, 248, 250, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 284  
 Italians viii, 24, 37, 40, 42, 44, 86, 96, 97, 99, 108, 116, 117, 119, 130, 160, 175, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 217, 230, 249, 252  
 Italy 43, 44, 50, 59, 86, 96, 99, 112, 117, 119, 175, 180, 183, 184, 185, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 193, 194, 198, 230, 279  
 'Izzat al-Jundi 191  
 Jacoby 139, 141  
 Jaecik 114, 115, 219  
 Jaffa 123, 125, 129, 146, 147, 152, 254  
 Jagow 82, 105, 183, 208, 210, 219  
 Jamal al-Din al-Afghani 39, 225  
 Jiddah 173, 180, 199  
 Jerusalem 7, 35, 101, 102, 103, 127, 145, 146, 147, 149, 151, 152, 168, 200, 201, 202, 203, 214, 215, 254, 268, 274, 275, 278  
 Jews 8, 68, 69, 123, 150, 250, 272, 279  
 Jidda 114  
 Jiddah 210, 211, 213  
 jihad v, 1, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20, 36, 38, 39, 41, 43, 51, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 71, 75, 76, 82, 89, 93, 96, 97, 99, 117, 119, 120, 121, 132, 133, 144, 157, 174, 175, 176, 177, 183, 190, 195, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 223, 224  
 jihad vii, viii, 12, 13, 14, 15, 37, 43, 45, 54, 55, 62, 70, 89, 94, 136, 140, 171, 264, 277, 285  
 Kaiser 29, 30, 47, 49, 52, 55, 80, 81, 132, 219, 263, 280  
 Karbala 12, 67, 149, 171, 218  
 Kashani 219, 270  
 Kaveh 228  
 Kazemzade 138  
 Kazim Efendi 177  
 Khedive 58, 80, 96, 98, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 117, 131, 141, 146, 154, 156, 191, 197, 243  
 Kitchener 34, 41, 58, 72, 76, 142, 198  
 Konya 92  
 Kress 7, 93, 100, 102, 111, 115, 116, 161, 181, 214, 272  
 Kress von Kressenstein 7, 93, 100, 161  
 Kurdistan 160, 258, 259  
 Kucubasi 11, 88, 101, 218, 226, 233, 280  
 Kut al-Amara 35, 70, 87, 127, 158, 164, 220, 236, 239  
 Kuwait 155, 173  
 Langwerth von Simmern 84  
 Lawrence 12, 66, 67, 68, 126, 128, 171, 266, 269, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 278, 280, 285, 286  
 Leachman 67, 73, 237  
 Les Amitiés Musulmanes 225  
 Lettow-Vorbeck 10, 206, 273, 285  
 Libya viii, 37, 38, 40, 43, 44, 45, 59, 63, 87, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 108, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 130, 131, 180, 183, 186, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 217, 279  
 Liman von Sanders 7, 69, 85, 99, 102, 115, 161, 199, 221, 273  
 Lit 181  
 Littman 215  
 Lossow 197, 202, 204, 208, 209, 210  
 Loytved-Hardegg 129, 148, 149, 181, 212, 213  
 Ma'an 114, 150, 209  
 Mad Mullah 42, 247  
 Mahdi ix, 12, 41, 174, 198, 224  
 Mahdiyya 40, 41  
 Major Haak 110  
 Major-General Sir M.G.E. Bowman-Manifold 103  
 Mannesmann 115, 116, 119, 120, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 196, 217  
 Marash 147  
 Martin Hartmann 14, 59, 133, 138, 225  
 Martini 192, 193  
 Masud Bey 81  
 Mata Hari 9, 10, 263, 278, 283  
 Matties 144  
 Max Adler 140  
 Mecca 8, 43, 58, 65, 77, 101, 114, 119, 144, 154, 157, 158, 159, 167, 168, 172, 173, 175, 177, 179, 205, 223, 237, 285  
 Medina 26, 89, 144, 148, 154, 172, 200, 201, 203, 205, 209, 213, 214, 234  
 Mediterranean 35, 52, 78, 85, 86, 97, 121, 122, 127, 160  
 Meggido 78, 161  
 Mehmed V 58, 61, 187  
 Mehmet Fahmi 105  
 Mehmet V. Reshat 146, 157  
 Mesopotamia 6, 9, 19, 31, 48, 67, 70, 73, 74, 76, 78, 91, 151, 223, 237, 238, 242, 254, 255, 259, 266, 275, 281, 283, 286  
 Metternich 163, 210, 213  
 Mevlevi regiment 91  
 Middle East vii, viii, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 20, 21, 22, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 54, 55, 62, 63, 65, 66, 70, 71, 72, 76, 77, 79, 85, 93, 104, 115, 121, 122, 126, 127, 131, 136, 140, 149, 152, 158, 164, 171, 178, 179, 180, 185, 197, 206, 218, 219, 220, 221, 226, 229, 233, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 255, 261, 262, 265, 269, 271, 273, 274, 275, 279, 281, 283  
 Midilli 52  
 militarism 3, 32  
 Morgenthau 54, 94, 128, 164, 275  
 Moritz 11, 84, 100, 113, 154, 155, 180, 181, 182, 213, 279

- Morocco 44, 61, 87, 137, 146, 183, 187, 194, 221, 256
- Mors 110
- Muhammad 'Abd al-Karim Khattabi 87
- Muhammad Abduh 81
- Muhammad 'Abduh 39, 58, 225
- Muhammad 'Ali 220
- Muhammad al-Qalqili 159
- Muhammad al-Rida 117
- Muhammad Fahmy 113, 118, 131, 141
- Muhammad Farid 75, 109, 111, 118, 131, 141, 150
- Muhammad Salih 200, 202, 205
- mujahidin* 119, 224
- Müller 201, 213, 255
- Müntaz Bey 101, 115, 150, 232
- Murphy 73
- Muslim v, viii, ix, 1, 6, 14, 17, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 75, 76, 84, 90, 91, 93, 94, 97, 98, 100, 106, 107, 112, 117, 119, 120, 123, 126, 132, 133, 134, 135, 143, 144, 146, 148, 151, 159, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 176, 178, 179, 185, 190, 200, 201, 202, 208, 212, 217, 219, 220, 221, 222, 224, 225, 226, 230, 238, 257, 272, 274
- Muslim rebellions 1, 134, 217
- Mustafa Bey (Azatürk) 87
- Mustafa Kamil 104, 109, 141
- Mustafa Vasif Bey 89
- Mytilene 68
- Neaman Belkind 127
- Nabius 148
- Nachrichtensaalorganisation* (Organisation of News Rooms) 153
- Nachrichtenstelle der Kaiserlich Deutschen Botchaft* (Intelligence Office of the Imperial German Embassy) 135
- Nadoiny 118, 119, 122, 182, 186, 188, 189, 192, 194, 196, 199, 203, 204, 205, 207, 208, 209
- Nag Hamadi 150
- Najaf 12, 149, 171
- Naples 112, 189, 190
- Naqshbandiyya 175
- nationalism 1, 25, 30, 56, 165, 223
- Nationalism 8, 22, 23, 37, 56, 58, 97, 262, 263, 268, 271, 272, 276, 279, 282
- Netherlands 38
- Neufeld ix, 112, 113, 182, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 209, 212, 213, 214, 217, 220, 265, 267, 270
- Neurath 162, 179
- Newsrooms 153
- Nicolai 10, 63, 68, 69, 70, 85, 88, 90, 275, 276
- Nicolaon 71, 72, 238, 265, 268, 269, 270, 279, 281, 283
- Niedermayer 67, 171, 227, 276
- NILI viii, 79, 95, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 282
- Nuri Bey 87, 93, 120, 188, 195, 196, 197
- Ömer Naci 87
- Oppenheim viii, ix, xi, 18, 22, 39, 40, 41, 43, 55, 61, 66, 67, 68, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 88, 112, 114, 129, 130, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 146, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 168, 169, 175, 177, 178, 179, 180, 195, 202, 205, 210, 212, 215, 217, 230, 255
- Orientalists 59, 79, 126, 135, 136, 237
- Oscar Gressmann 223, 255
- Oskan Bey 46
- Oskan Efendi 90
- Oskar Mann 137
- Osmanischer Lloyd 145
- Ottoman Empire v, vii, ix, x, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 38, 40, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 62, 63, 66, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 116, 117, 126, 128, 130, 132, 141, 144, 145, 148, 152, 153, 155, 160, 162, 163, 164, 166, 170, 171, 172, 175, 177, 178, 180, 181, 182, 210, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 224, 230, 233, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 255, 256, 271, 276, 277, 278, 279, 281, 282
- Ottoman government 5, 18, 19, 24, 26, 28, 44, 45, 46, 48, 50, 53, 55, 69, 70, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 99, 107, 109, 118, 123, 126, 147, 148, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 162, 164, 167, 171, 174, 182, 190, 191, 192, 193, 195, 207, 208, 210, 211, 213, 214, 215, 219, 228, 230, 234, 241
- Ottomanism 28, 56, 263, 271, 279
- Ottomans v, viii, 1, 12, 20, 21, 22, 25, 35, 43, 44, 45, 48, 50, 52, 54, 58, 61, 62, 74, 75, 78, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 103, 104, 105, 107, 109, 111, 112, 113, 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 122, 124, 127, 128, 130, 131, 146, 156, 157, 158, 161, 162, 164, 167, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 177, 182, 184, 186, 189, 191, 194, 195, 196, 197, 201, 206, 212, 215, 217, 219, 220, 222, 223, 224, 225, 233, 236, 237, 239, 240, 263
- Padishah 82
- Palestine 7, 8, 12, 25, 36, 68, 73, 78, 79, 93, 95, 99, 100, 102, 111, 118, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 134, 137, 144, 147, 150, 151, 160, 161, 163, 170, 175, 178, 198, 200, 204, 206, 255, 257, 261, 263, 266, 269, 274, 278, 279, 280, 283, 285, 286
- Pallavicini 183
- Pan-Islam v, vii, viii, 1, 13, 14, 20, 22, 28, 34, 39, 40, 42, 44, 59, 62, 64, 70, 82, 86, 133, 135, 136, 165, 166, 175, 176, 196, 229, 238, 261, 272
- Pan-Slavism 50
- Paul Weitz 48
- Persia 6, 31, 35, 61, 72, 82, 83, 98, 134, 149, 152, 165, 171, 178, 179, 226, 255, 256, 259
- Persian Gulf 35
- Plenge 114, 115
- Pomiankowski 19, 102, 103, 104, 164, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 221, 222, 223, 227, 277
- Port Said 173

- POWs 67, 134, 135, 136, 167, 178, 241  
 Pröbster 137, 197, 277  
 propaganda v, vi, 1, 2, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19,  
 20, 21, 22, 28, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 55, 60, 61, 62,  
 63, 65, 70, 71, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 83, 84, 86, 88,  
 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 104, 106, 107,  
 110, 111, 114, 115, 116, 118, 120, 129, 130, 131,  
 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 140, 142, 143, 144,  
 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154,  
 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 164, 165, 166, 167,  
 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177,  
 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 188,  
 189, 191, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200,  
 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 210, 212, 213,  
 214, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 223, 224, 225,  
 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 234, 236, 238,  
 239, 241  
 propagandists v, 14, 16, 17, 33, 57, 132, 163, 164,  
 166, 172, 175, 180, 218, 222, 226, 238  
 Prüfer ix, 84, 110, 111, 137, 149, 150, 151, 163,  
 175, 176, 177, 178, 203, 204  
 Prussia 29, 229  
 Qadiriyya 39, 119  
 Quadt 108, 111, 113, 118  
 Qunfuda 181  
 Rabah Bou Kabouya 137  
 Rabigh 181, 213  
 Rahmi Bey 69  
 Ramsay 200, 201, 204  
 Raphael Abulafia 125  
 Rashid Rida 39, 58, 73, 75, 76  
 Rauf Bey 223  
 rebellions 21, 22, 36, 37, 38, 83, 91, 96, 106, 111,  
 133, 160, 172, 174, 176, 180, 181, 196, 199, 202,  
 203, 207, 217, 222, 228  
*Reichskolonialamt* (Imperial Colonial Office) 135  
 Reshadieh 53  
 Reşit Bey 192, 193  
 Revue du Maghrib 228  
 Richard Sorge 66  
 Rifat 111, 112, 113, 115, 131, 137, 140, 220, 278  
 Roloff ix, 155, 172, 173, 174, 175, 182, 200, 217  
 Romani 232  
 Romborg 109, 111, 112, 228  
 Rome 50, 71, 99, 111, 112, 116, 118, 120, 184,  
 186, 187, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 198, 242, 266  
 Rösaler 147, 148, 165  
 Royal Navy 52, 53, 78  
 Rumania 11, 51, 245, 250  
 Russia 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 22, 29, 30, 34, 36, 37, 38,  
 46, 48, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 61, 71, 72, 76, 79, 93,  
 109, 117, 125, 133, 134, 142, 146, 148, 174, 240,  
 245  
 Sa'ad Zaghlul 81  
 Sadiq Bey 178  
 Said Halim Pasha 74, 87, 88  
 Sa'id Ma'mun Abu Fadil 205  
 Sami Bey 186, 189, 191  
 Sam'a 211, 212  
 Sanusiya viii, 37, 40, 42, 44, 59, 63, 81, 86, 87, 96,  
 97, 99, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 130,  
 174, 180, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 190, 191,  
 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 228, 230, 231, 284  
 Sarah Aaronsohn 128  
 Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdullah Hasan 40  
 Sayyid Talib al-Naqib 74, 233  
 Schabinger 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140,  
 141, 142, 143, 152, 164, 168, 205  
 Schaeffer 115  
 Scharfenberg 165  
 Schiesser 144  
 Schröder 137  
 Schweinitz 190, 191  
 Sebastian Beck 137  
 section IIIb 10, 63, 85, 173  
 Section IIIb 63, 118, 204, 207, 209, 210, 211, 214  
 Selaheddin 138  
 Selim Sami 89  
 Serbia 4, 247  
 Shah 217  
 Shakespear 67, 73, 237, 283  
 Shammur 87, 156, 173, 211, 222  
 Sharif Bourguiba 87  
 Sharif Husayn 8, 58, 65, 80, 101, 119, 144, 150,  
 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 167, 168,  
 169, 170, 173, 175, 179, 181, 201, 206, 208, 213,  
 215, 223, 226, 237, 241  
 shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish 88  
 Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish 57, 137, 150  
 Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahim 179  
 Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahid 209  
 Shaykh Ahmad al-Sharif al-Sanusi 87  
 Shaykh Hamdan 205  
 Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi 57, 87, 88, 119,  
 137, 143, 167, 178, 195  
 Shaykh Sidi Muhammad al-Kiyani 45  
 Shaykhülislam 14, 57, 58  
 Shi'ite 12, 67, 149, 171, 218, 223, 264  
 Shükri Pasha 89  
 sick man 82  
 Sievers 114, 129  
 Simla 72, 73, 237  
 Simon 101, 150, 250, 251, 252, 278, 279  
 Sinai 62, 68, 100, 101, 124, 125, 127, 150, 187,  
 215, 226, 232, 255, 258, 269, 283, 286  
 Sir Wyndham Deedes 159  
 Slatin 106, 107, 198, 203  
 Smyrna 68, 69, 243, 248  
 Snouck-Hurgronje 14, 15, 59, 133, 280, 286  
 Sokolov 126  
 Solf 206, 207, 208  
 Solomon Hall 207  
 Somalia 40, 42, 181, 207, 209, 247  
 Somaliland 83, 156  
 Stieber 64, 65  
 Storrs 74, 241, 242, 280  
 Straits 34, 52  
 Sudan ix, 14, 22, 40, 41, 82, 83, 84, 96, 106, 107,  
 108, 112, 114, 115, 152, 156, 178, 180, 181, 184,



- 187, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 209, 212, 213, 214, 220, 221, 224, 231, 242, 269, 284
- Suez Canal viii, 36, 91, 92, 98, 99, 102, 104, 105, 107, 109, 110, 116, 120, 146, 151, 168, 177, 181, 182, 187, 194, 195, 200, 202, 219, 221, 232
- Sufi 14, 39, 40, 42, 257
- Sulayman al- Baruni 45, 194
- Sulayman al-Baruni 92, 186
- Sulayman al-Bustani 90
- Sulayman Effendi al-Bustani 46
- Süleyman Askari Bey 87, 232, 233
- sultan v, 13, 20, 22, 23, 36, 38, 51, 56, 57, 58, 60, 71, 76, 82, 99, 118, 119, 132, 133, 146, 157, 158, 166, 174, 184, 187, 194, 195, 202, 222, 229, 231, 239
- Sultan Mehmed VI 231
- Sultan Osman I 53
- Switzerland 34, 109, 134, 137, 139, 141, 161, 199
- Sykes-Picot 8, 36
- Syria 8, 68, 74, 76, 78, 79, 90, 95, 100, 137, 144, 148, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 158, 163, 169, 170, 173, 175, 176, 178, 182, 201, 213, 234, 235, 254, 262, 269, 277
- Tabriz 222
- Taif 211
- Takizade 138
- Talaat 46, 50, 56, 70, 85, 112, 130, 156, 162, 252
- Tanzimat 25, 166
- Tasvir-i Efkiar 61, 146
- Teheran 149
- Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa viii, xi, 57, 66, 70, 85, 137, 263, 286
- Thucydides 32
- Tijaniyya 14, 42, 87, 257
- Tilger 185, 186
- TM xi, 66, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 101, 115, 137, 150, 167, 192, 218, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235
- Toepke 189, 190, 191
- Townshend 70, 281
- Trabzon 146, 149
- Transjordan 25, 27, 278
- Triple Alliance 36, 50, 230
- Triple Entente 33, 50
- Tripoli 44, 45, 120, 160, 184, 185, 186, 190, 191
- Tripolitania vii, viii, ix, 24, 43, 45, 56, 84, 86, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 117, 118, 121, 122, 130, 180, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 194, 195, 196, 197, 222, 230, 231, 256, 257
- Trommer Papa 69
- Tunisia 40, 44, 81, 87, 97, 183, 184, 186, 188, 191, 194, 197, 221, 256
- Turanists 49
- Turkestan 49, 149
- Turkey vii, 11, 14, 15, 23, 36, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 68, 69, 72, 74, 78, 79, 83, 85, 91, 92, 98, 106, 123, 128, 133, 136, 142, 145, 153, 157, 158, 162, 163, 166, 168, 173, 184, 189, 191, 215, 221, 228, 237, 238, 254, 257, 260, 264, 265, 269, 270, 271, 274, 278, 279, 281, 284
- Turkish army 127, 134, 143, 151, 164
- 'ulama 153, 174, 219, 241
- 'Urabi 224
- Urfa 147
- Ürgüplü Hayri Bey 57, 58, 220
- USA 46, 247
- 'Usman dan Fodio 39
- Vassel 157
- Vehip Paşa 154, 182
- Vienna xi, 10, 67, 104, 106, 107, 142, 166, 191, 192, 203, 221, 222, 255, 262, 263, 264, 268, 274, 278
- von der Goltz 7, 10, 85, 227, 271
- von Gumpenberg viii, 121
- von Hentig 67, 171, 227
- von Laffert 85, 100
- von Quadt 108
- von Stotzingen ix, 170, 203, 205, 206, 208, 211, 212, 213, 214, 285
- von Syburg 209
- Wadai 186, 194
- Wahhabis 174
- Walter 10, 63, 69, 123, 138, 275, 276, 282, 283
- Walter Gribbon 123, 282
- Walter Lehmann 138
- Wangenheim 50, 51, 52, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 120, 128, 129, 148, 149, 151, 152, 162, 177, 181, 185, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 227, 233
- Weizmann 126
- WeSENDON 99, 121, 140, 152, 184, 185, 186, 189, 193, 197, 205, 207, 208, 209
- Western Front 33, 34, 35, 37, 103, 109, 126, 136, 143, 238, 239
- Wilhelm II 29, 47, 54, 135, 160, 219
- Wilhelm Souchon 53, 54
- Willy Haas 139
- Wilson 73, 283
- Woolley 124
- Woolley 68
- Yanbo 154, 213
- Yavuz Sultan Selim 52
- Yemen 67, 175, 200, 201, 207, 209, 211, 212, 223, 233, 234, 256
- Yossef Lihansky 125, 128
- Young Egyptians 141, 161
- Young Turks 7, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 45, 49, 55, 56, 97, 154, 166, 174, 239, 241, 256, 258, 267, 271, 277, 282
- Yusuf Bey al-Sadik 81
- zawiyya 190
- Zeki Paşa 100, 115
- Zimmermann 10, 107, 112, 132, 152, 204, 205, 209, 282
- Zionism 126, 128, 238, 265, 280
- Zionists 8, 122, 163

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